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Cover Image:

Sketch from Issey Miyake *Just Before*

Huge bolts of fabric rolled like magic carpets, each holding scores of garments These are unsewn *Just Before* clothing the result of information technologies so precise that the wearer need only cut along a dotted line to complete them Forms imagined by the wearer they are joyous haute couture of our high-tech age "

text from *Issey Miyake Making Things*

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fashion

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Introduction

The question of fashion has been investigated repeatedly in an attempt to capture and explain what it means (or meant in the past) to be a part of a society at a given place and time. In order to assume a position within the social formation, it is necessary to assert one's individuality. While it is certainly impossible to encapsulate such a formless and slippery subject as identity within the confines of language and the printed page, fashion might suggest an interesting point of entry to the discussion. Through fashion it is possible to both mark one's particularities as an individual and concurrently either fit into the surrounding milieu or stand apart from it. Fashion is where the forces of change in society are most self-evident. The recurrence of these investigations is not unlike fashion's cyclical processes.

The perpetual interest in fashion, I would argue, is not just for the purpose of understanding identity per se, but more importantly fashion's relation to the constitution of that identity. Fashion is perhaps the most important aspect of the study of identity formation, because it assists us in locating these identities in time. It is through this temporal experience that we establish ourselves. The phrase "we wear our heart on our sleeve" immediately comes to mind, and its imagery should not be taken lightly. As commonly assumed, clothing is the most immediate projection of who we are. What we wear and what we choose to consume are thus inseparable from culture at large. As such, fashion is essential to our definition of self.

The same is true of architecture. As Mark Wigley so definitively demonstrated in *White Walls, Designer Dresses*, the development of the Modern Movement in architecture relied on many of the same impulses of identity-shaping as the fashion industry did. Modern architecture's absorption into culture was dependent on individuals' concerns—both unconscious and conscious—about public appearance. These concerns carried architectural modernism's message/form into larger audiences. And although modernism's spread has proven to be a striking example of fashion's cultural strength, it was certainly not the first, as can be seen in articles throughout this issue of *Thresholds*.

Today, although modernism (albeit post-) still holds the stage, it is clear that we live in different conditions than those of the early twentieth century. One of the important aspects of the current globalized society is the availability and the overwhelming abundance of images. Despite the profusion of imagery, however, images seem to retain less and less of their clarity. The predictable result is uniformity and the leveling of difference.

Paradoxically, however, the same set of global circumstances allow for the production of local meaning, whether the setting is the Middle East, Hong Kong, or urban U.S.A. Faced with this reality, it seems that now would be a good time to again consider the role of fashion in society, and by extension, architecture's connection to fashion. The writings contained in this issue are a diverse set of responses to our contemporary condition. They illustrate through specific cases that the global need not erase the individual. And so the cycle begins again.

Architecture After Couture[†]

Margit J. Mayer: *Is fashion becoming more democratic or more elitist at the moment?*

Helmut Lang: *I am trying to work this out for myself right now. But perhaps all those old rhythms are outdated. It looks like fashion today may be democratic as well as elitist, an organic inherent contradiction.*[1]

Flashback to a scene some fifteen years ago. Then a student in the History of Architecture and Urbanism program at Cornell, I was having coffee with a fellow student in the program. We were discussing Val Warke's seminal course on architecture and fashion, then being held in a classroom upstairs. I expressed my disappointment that due to the stringent requirements of the undergraduate degree, I wasn't allowed to enroll in the class. My friend remarked that I should not complain: Warke was a little behind the times. After all, everyone was talking about Derrida and Decon. Why in the world would I want to take a class on fashion? It was, it would seem, the squarest thing to do. I raised some doubts, but my friend was an older and wiser grad student, certainly better dressed than I, and apparently more knowledgeable of what was *au courant* in the field.

Yet Warke was certainly not *passé*. He was, if anything, a trendsetter. For in just a few years Deborah Fausch, Paulette Singley, Rodolphe el-Khoury, and Zvi Efrat would publish a collection of essays titled *Architecture: In Fashion*, and Warke's text "'In' Architecture: Observing the Mechanisms of Fashion" would become the theoretical centerpiece.[2] A spate of books on architecture and fashion would follow. Naturally, as was the case with all too many critical themes in the 90s, the interest in fashion cooled and *Architecture: In Fashion* went out of print. Over the last few years, however, queer space, bodies, non-Euclidean geometries, and homeless vehicles have in turn fallen out of vogue while fashion has come back onto the critical horizon. Whereas just five years ago, students wondered why I was giving them Warke's essay instead of something more appropriately dark and gloomy, today's students read it avidly. And now *Thresholds* proposes to investigate fashion.

But is this new resurgence of interest in fashion merely a revival of styles of theory from a decade past? Are we now far enough away from fashion that it has become mere fodder for the endless recycling process that is the fashion mechanism of contemporary architecture theory? Or is there a deeper significance to this new attention to fashion?

In this essay I will argue for the latter. Even a cursory glance at architectural culture suggests that far beyond any wistful longing on the part of theoreticians, fashion and architecture have never been so clearly linked. The most eagerly awaited projects of the year are the Prada stores by OMA. Just as Andreas Gursky memorializes

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[†] *Editor's Note: The images featured as a part of this article are the work of Israel Kandanan and are explained within the piece.*

[1] Charlotte Seeling, *Fashion: The Century of the Designer* (Cologne: Könemann, 1999): 607.

[2] Deborah Fausch, Paulette Singley, Rodolphe el-Khoury, and Zvi Efrat, eds *Architecture: In Fashion* (New York Princeton Architectural Press, 1994)

Prada's minimalist style in his photographs at MoMA, we are told to forget Supermodernism—it's last year's look—and turn instead to some new, as yet unnamed, fashion. Hyped more than any project since Bilbao, funded by lavish budgets, designed by some of the most talented architects of the day, will this new conjunction of architecture and fashion cut new lines for the architectural haute couture, or will it kill OMA once and for all? So, too, we are in an era when a magazine ostensibly about architecture and design—*Wallpaper*—gains its advertising revenues not from roofing manufacturers or purveyors of CAD software, but from Prada, Versace, and Gucci. If *Wallpaper* uses architecture as an alibi to sell fashion, it hardly needs to do so. Architecture students, at least at the more avant-garde schools, no longer hunt for the newest theory journal from the MIT Press. Instead they look to *Flaunt* or *Tank* or *Dutch*.

Fashion, it seems, has more to offer architecture than theory does. But rather than seeing that as an opportunity to rally nostalgically behind theory—after the myriad of symposia that announced "the death of theory" could we really want to bring it back, in zombie form? — I will make two points: that architecture and fashion are linked in an enduring relationship and that the dramatic changes in fashion culture over the last fifteen years force us to reconsider the very structure of architecture itself.

In its modern—that is, desacralized—form, architecture shares a common origin with fashion. Although architecture has been with us for thousands of years, it emerges as a fully modern discipline only with the Enlightenment and the subsequent shift in the dominant class from the aristocracy and clergy to the bourgeoisie. Until then, architecture's role had been to demarcate unquestionable class differences: the aristocracy and the clergy, on the one hand, and the commoners, who would have no architecture but merely building, on the other. Architecture's mission, then, was a divine one: to announce the presence of the more holy, devout, or noble to both levels of society. The excess expenditure that architecture gave rise to in comparison to a simple building vividly demonstrated class difference. Clothing played a similar role: the noble or the priest would don clothes that made visible their difference from the commoner. Certainly more expensive, the clothes of the nobles were frequently deliberately impractical, so as to underscore the impossibility of manual labor for the gentle classes.

During the last stages of the pre-modern period, as early as the end of the seventeenth century, a highly developed culture of taste began to emerge in Europe. At first, this drive toward this culture came from within the aristocracy: obsessed with finding a way to legitimate their position, the last nobles turned to connoisseurship. To be a refined and sophisticated gentleman or lady was the last means by which the aristocracy, having lost its divine right to rule, could legitimate itself.[3] The acquisition of the taste needed to become a connoisseur was not value or class free: ample capital was essential. The truly accomplished connoisseur would not merely appreciate art, he would collect important works of art, perhaps write an essay of appreciation or two about items he owned or had seen on a *Grand Tour*, and would construct carefully designed architectural edifices. Architecture became a status symbol, as nobles, particularly in England, opened their estates to tourists. Already in 1775, close to 2,500 visitors visited the estate of the dukes of Buckingham at Stowe.[4]

Fashion underwent a similar transformation, reaching an apogee under Louis XIV, who used it—as he did

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[3] On the development of connoisseurship, see M. H. Abrams, "Art-As-Such: The Sociology of Modern Aesthetics," *Doing Things With Texts: Essays in Criticism and Critical Theory* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1989): 135-158.

[4] Abrams, 150.

Versailles—to legitimate his position. Louis XIV had hoped to make France, and thereby himself, the arbiter of taste in Europe. Since the Sun King set all fashion, being *au courant* meant being close to the King. How similar one's fashions were to the ever-changing tastes of the King indicated how favored one was: like architecture, fashion served as a marker of difference. If, as the Enlightenment dawned, divinity was no longer a sure bet for those in power, then at least they could justify their rule on account of their taste.[5]

Thus, for centuries architecture and fashion were closely linked. The shift to bourgeois rule changed the players at the top, but not the nearly identical roles of the two fields as they reproduced class structure. Upper class women would make the pilgrimage to Paris every year for the newest lines of haute couture, quite literally, "high needlework." These were the most favored socialites, graced by taste and money, different from the rest of the rabble. As with the Sun King, the closer one was to haute couture, the more privileged one's class. The literalness with which the king was replaced by the *couturier* is demonstrated by the attitude proclaimed by the first truly successful signature fashion designer, Paul Poiret, when he stated, "Fashion needs a tyrant."[6] From the salon, fashion would then descend to the masses. If the elite were always dressed in the style of the future, shoppers at Saks Fifth Avenue or Bloomingdale's might be a season or two late, while the simpler folk at Macy's would have to wait still longer as the in-house designers copied Chanel and Dior.

The historical analysis of architecture's status as a marker of class difference is confirmed by the writing of French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. In *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste*, Bourdieu convincingly argues that taste is not class-free but rather reproduces the existing class structure. Even in the supposedly neutral realm of the university, it is those who are exposed to the culture of affluence who have a better chance to excel. Even the most ambitious members of the underclass are often condemned to a secondary role, crippled by their lack of acculturation during early childhood. Only those with a mastery of the code with which to decipher a work of art or architecture can make the successful transition to the cultural aristocracy.[7] Now certainly patrons of architecture would depend on this code as a way of affirming their cultural status: the work of architecture as an avant-garde art object serves, like a couture design, as a marker of difference, making visible the patron's membership in the cultural elite. For architects too, avant-gardism served not so much as a way of taunting the bourgeoisie, as much as the means by which the dominant class structure would be reproduced within the profession. For without a good understanding of what architecture is, why it is necessary to interrogate its boundaries, and how that interrogation might be undertaken, the avant-gardist cannot possibly succeed. Bourdieu's arguments are convincing and have been taken up repeatedly in recent architecture writing.[8]

Yet, the Owl of Minerva spreads her wings at dusk. While we have been analyzing the way the dominant class system is reproduced in architecture, the taste culture that underwrites that system has come undone, unlinking markers of difference from status and thereby condemning Bourdieuvian analyses to a historical and retrospective role. Architecture ignores this crucial shift within fashion at its peril.

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[5] James Laver and Amy de la Haye, *Costume and Fashion: a Concise History* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1995).

[6] Seeling, 23.

[7] Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (New York Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984): 485-500.

[8] Kazys Varnelis, "The Education of the Innocent Eye," *The Journal of Architectural Education* 51.4 (May 1998): 212-223; Garry Stevens, *The Favored Circle* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1998); and Hélène Lipstadt, "Theorizing the Competition: The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu as a Challenge to Architectural History," *Thresholds* 21 (Fall 2000): 32-36.

The change in fashion had begun by the early 1960s. Driven by increasing affluence in the middle class and by the unraveling of the lower class's ethic of saving, fashion began to spread throughout the classes. But it did not do so merely from the top down. Rather, the fashion boutique was developed in London, providing limited run clothing for a small group of urban youth that used this clothing to mark off their difference—not as a class but as a group with a shared, generational identity. These were rebels who would not defer sensual satisfaction for the sake of savings. These were youth who were, if anything, different. Would a young British youthquaker of the early 60s trade her Mary Quant miniskirt for a Chanel dress? Probably not. From then on *haute couture* was doomed.[9]

By the 1960s, the top-down system of fashion began to collapse. Already at the house of Dior in 1960, Yves Saint Laurent had begun to poach black turtlenecks and leather jackets from street culture. This insult to the autonomy of fashion,which could clearly be related to pop art and architecture, was tremendously controversial, forcing Laurent out of Dior and at the same time allowing the young star to found his own house in 1962. It also points to a further change in the system: from then on, haute couture would have to look to the street. As if he had imbibed the heady spirits of Claude Lévi-Strauss's *la pensée sauvage*, Saint Laurent became a keen poacher of the myths that the young *bricoleurs* of the streets wove with their clothes. Saint Laurent stole the retro and ethnic garb of the hippies to give his *couture* clients a distinctive look: "the evening is the time for folklore," he stated. But just as crucial was his prescient understanding that haute couture was dying. Couture, he concluded, could serve only as a way of attracting attention to his ready-to-wear line.[10]

Laurent was right. The lengthy couture fittings and high prices for clothing with a short-lived lifespan were too wasteful, and above all, too time-consuming for even the richest members of the younger set. Moreover, the blurring of class distinctions that took place in 1960s culture made couture seem square. The collapse of the salon is demonstrated most vividly in the numbers. Whereas in 1943 *couture* had a worldwide clientele of 20,000, by the late 1990s, the clientele was down to a mere 200.[11]

Not only is couture threatened by the continued existence of underground and aboveground boutique labels; it is positively undone by middle-brow stores like Banana Republic or Target. These stores make clothes that look good, frequently setting trends or at least copying both boutique and couture in real-time, often in a more sensible manner. As these mass-produced clothes are significantly cheaper and generally well-made, buying couture now seems to be purely indulgent. Even the rich can understand Target's appeal when its ads read, "It's fashionable to pay less."[12] Moreover, the aesthetic of *bricolage* begun in the 1960s continues today: you may now wear cheap sneakers along with a Helmut Lang jacket. Or perhaps you wear Miu Miu shoes along with ratty old Levis.

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[9] Seeling, 393-401

[10] This is the system described by Roland Barthes, *The Fashion System* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983) In Warke's essay on fashion and architecture in which haute couture seeks out vital "angry sources" and then, by setting a trend, allows these to descend through the classes If this current paper marks a difference from both Barthes and Warke, it is only because of the changes that have occurred in fashion since those key texts have been published. On Yves Saint Laurent, see Seeling, 355-367

[11] Seeling, 305.

[12] Teri Agens, *The End of Fashion. How Marketing Changed the Clothes Business Forever* (New York. Quill, 1999): 11. See this crucial book for the collapse of fashion In particular, Agens's account of the effects of licensing on fashion would seem to be a cautionary tale for architects—from Michael Graves to Herzog and de Meuron—who have increasingly become intrigued by this idea

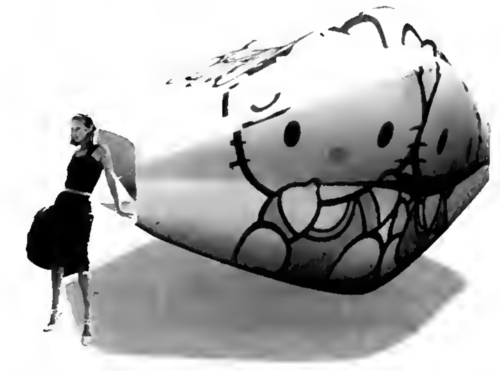
Fashion's radical undoing has the possibility of immense repercussions for architecture. The reason that we continue to care about fashion, even after the collapse of couture is that difference is no longer the property of the elite. This is where Bourdieu's argument becomes dated by its origins in the highly hierarchical culture of postwar France, a society in which haute couture thrived. Instead, markers of difference are now commonly deployed in culture. The contemporary subject no longer tries to fit in as much as she proclaims her own identity. Fashion is simply one means, among many, with which we do this.[13]

Similar things could happen in architecture, and indeed need to happen to architecture if it is to avoid obsolescence. If architecture is still heavy, slow, and expensive, it will have to become faster, cheaper, and more responsive. If architecture, still dominated by a couture culture of avant-gardist elitism, is to survive, it must realize that haute couture is doomed, or at the very least, can be only one among many. Instead, architecture will have to find out how to take advantage of a society in which difference is no longer something only for the very rich, but is now for everyone.

For an example of one possibility—indeed just one of many—we can look at the work of Israel Kandarian, a thesis student at SCI-Arc in Fall 1999. Certainly not a member of what Garry Stevens would call the "favored circle," Israel is a skateboarder from Orange County. Driven by an intense focus on the "cool," skateboard culture is greatly concerned with a conscious articulation of fashion. Israel saw a business model to follow in the successful line of clothes Shawn Stüssy launched from his garage next door. For his thesis, then, Israel explored the possibility of creating a fashion line for architecture. Instead of the typical avant-gardist couture practice, Israel concluded that architects must find a way of becoming more sympathetic to the desires of young consumers for something ready-to-wear, hip, accessible, and informed by a bottom-up ethic. The title of his thesis would be "Out of the Museums and into the Streets."

Israel's Ministry of Architecture [MOA] collection is inspired by the super-architectural space created through the bodily processes of the modern skateboarder and the appropriated urban landscape. MOA is intended to appeal to not only grown-up skateboarders, a large population in Southern California, but also to a demographic segment in the population that likes to associate itself with skateboard culture (e.g. consumers of skateboard fashion).

Instead of following the established patterns of practices like those of Michael Graves and Aldo Rossi, starting with a couture practice that would then make smaller objects for the masses, Israel proposes to begin with the T-Shirt. As a graphic product, dètourned *onto vintage shirts with silk-screening and hand-stitched drawings, the T-Shirt announces the MOA line. The MOA line is rounded out by a series of hyperskin furniture units and a collection of larger fiberglass objects that can be used as surfaces for skateboarding to "toolshed" structures that bridge the gap between furniture and house. Beginning as part of his thesis project, the clothing line Israel launched with MOA has been sold in Los Angeles, and is also published in* *Surface, *a major contemporary fashion magazine with a circulation of over 100,000 readers.*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[13] On this, see in particular the writings of sociologists Scott Lash and John Urry, *Economies of Sign and Space* (London: Sage, 1994). What sociologists are only now trying to understand, marketers have been working with for years. See Michael J. Weiss, *The Clustered World: How We Live, What We Buy, and What it All Means About Who We Are* (New York: Little, Brown, and Company, 1999).

The Catalog

The Catalog, a collection of short stories by the Hong Kong author Dung Kai-cheung, was published in 1999. Its table of contents, a list of 99 story titles named after fashionable brand names, new technological gadgets, and other popular phenomena, is a particularly compelling embodiment of a fashion canon. As a snapshot of a moment of popular consumption, it exemplifies the edgy celebration of the present—young, trendy, and modern—that is the driving force of fashion in late capitalism. Yet, presented as a literary project about Hong Kong culture, *The Catalog* is nonetheless fundamentally positioned as a record of a time past—a sentiment never taken lightly in Hong Kong in the era leading up to and following 1997.[1] Thus, the contents page of *The Catalog* presents us with a curious combination of fashion-as-history and history-as-fashion. As such, the list is defined by the contradiction of the passé and the fashionable.

Crucial to understanding 1997 as a time-marker in Hong Kong's history is to acknowledge that the blunt redrawing of global boundaries is invested with fundamentally local meaning. Within this, *The Catalog*'s contents page is also uniquely placed. Even as this list presents us with a list of globally ubiquitous commodities, it seems that there is (was) only one place in which this canon is located—Hong Kong. The Japanese, American, and British brand names which have so often been seen as top-down, statically marketed products, become in these stories skillful wordplays that readdress the relationship of consumption to the formation of identity. In these stories, what is marketed—logo, brand, style—can also come to represent something else—names, sounds, friendships, pasts, sicknesses, and so on. The stories translated here, "Mebius," "Prada," "Hello Kitty," and "Agnes b.," are a small sampling chosen for their coherency. They are a quartet that helps question the basic problematics of contemporary global fashion consumption. Who wears what? Who wears what for whom? Who looks? Who is looked at? As a result, the stories of *The Catalog* seem to dramatize notions of value outside of the predominant models of economic and cultural consumption, even though they appear to fully embrace the mirage offered by the contemporary fashion system.

W.W.

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[1] It was during 1997 that the British colonial government transferred power to the People's Republic of China (PRC).

Mebius[2]

The only reason Mei Bei bought that *Sharp Mebius* was because it sounded like her name. It was only later that she found out that the name referred to the Mebius circle, one long strip of paper twisted into a Figure Eight, flipped over on one side, both ends taped together to make a ring with indistinguishable inside and outside surfaces.

That afternoon, Mei Bei was in Mong Kok buying the Mebius. She found a café in a shopping center to sit down in and couldn't help but to open the Mebius up. With its light and thin silver metal body, even without turning it on, just placed on a tabletop, you could appreciate it for half a day. Lifting the monitor screen, Mei Bei saw a young man at a table in the corner typing on his laptop. Mei Bei could tell with one look that his was a *Sony Vaio*.

Mei Bei had always thought that writing in a café was a hilariously pretentious type of activity, but on the second day she found herself bringing Mebius to the café again. The thin Mebius was like a window to the unpredictable. In order to buy the Mebius, she had spent half of her savings from two years' work as a reporter. Mei Bei wrote articles about fashionable objects for a magazine; one day she suddenly quit, telling her editor that she had to write a story truly for herself. Everything, from the plot to the characters, was already fully thought out, not for any special reason, only to put aside materialism and to live entirely for passion. Mei Bei stretched her fingers, and turned on the Mebius; the screen wallpaper was the Mebius circle, like a rainbow in the sky. Upon opening up Chinese *Word*, she saw that young man again, with his back to her, going *tickety-tack* on his Vaio.

The male lead in Mei Bei's novel was called Lau Wah Sang, an intellectual young writer, critical of worldly values and driven to write serious literature. The female lead was called Wai, a salesgirl in a fashion boutique, an "In" girl with counterfeit brands covering her whole body. Inscrutably real and fake, inconsistent, she was Lau Wah Sang's fantasy girl. One day, Lau Wah Sang woke up to find Wai missing, so he spent the whole day searching for her. Along the way in different places, he saw different fashion objects and thought about his time with Wai. He realized that between negligence and misunderstanding, he had already fallen in love with her.

Mei Bei saw the Vaio man three afternoons in a row. He was always sitting on her left, wearing business suits, and had the air of the salesman played by Takenouchi Yutaka in the *Beach Boys*.[3] He was always working in English *PowerPoint*, probably on a presentation for work. The more Mei Bei typed, the more she felt lost, always staring over at Vaio, her novel stuck in that beginning where Lau Wah Sang wakes up in bed in a state of daydreaming. On the fourth day the electricity failed on Mei Bei's Mebius, and the battery was out. She couldn't help but get angry, and then saw that the young man's Vaio had also stopped, as though in reflection. Both of them blankly sipped their teas with nothing to do. Suddenly he took out his appointment book, ripped out a piece of paper, twisted it into a Figure Eight and wrote on one side: "Hi, Mebius!" He tossed it onto Mei Bei's table. Mei Bei curiously picked up the paper to look, and getting the point, picked up a pen and wrote on the other side: "Vaio, Hello." She then tossed it back.

On the fifth day, Vaio brought his teacup and his Notebook over. So Mei Bei invited him to sit down, the two computers placed side by side, like a pair of lovers. They asked each other about their work and were searching for things to talk about. Vaio said, "Actually, it's not like we have to work on our computers here." Mei Bei murmured in agreement and said, "Absolutely no reason. So why do we come here everyday?" Vaio, holding his chin, said, "Maybe it's because we bought the laptops." Both of them found this idea funny and couldn't stop laughing.

Mei Bei went home, took that corny novel in the computer, and put it in the Recycle Bin. Opening up a new document, she had a new idea. She decided to write about her most beloved trendy objects, love stories that happened because of Prada, Hello Kitty, sticker photos, and fisherman hats. Why not? But she first wrote a Mebius and Vaio story imagining their strange fortunes tomorrow afternoon.

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[2] The correct spelling is Mobius strip. Mebius will be used here, because that is the spelling used by Sharp.

[3] *Beach Boys* is a Japanese television series that was popular in the late 1990s.

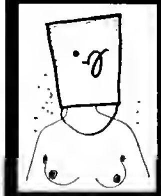
Agnes b.

The first time that Ga Tzai took the train to work was when he first saw on the platform the back of the girl who carries the Agnes b. bag on her left shoulder. The night before, Ga Tzai and his girlfriend Amy had had a fight. He had gone drinking alone, and as he was driving home, he had crashed into the sidewalk. The car's left door was broken off and had to be taken into the shop for repair. Luckily, he didn't injure any pedestrians, and there were no policemen on the street. Only his neck was strained. It hurt a bit.

That day, the girl was standing on the very front edge of the platform with her back to Ga Tzai, staring at the end of the metal tracks. Her hair was not long, parted into two small pigtails, leaving a slim white nape visible. She was wearing a simple sapphire blue and white striped long-sleeved Tee and jeans. Her shoulders were pulled back, her collarbones were withdrawn tensely, slender arms loosely hung on both sides, palms held open, and her small bum lifted high. He could imagine how in the front, her breasts would be thrust forward. Ga Tzai's left hand was gripping his heavy briefcase, straining to see the girl's other side. The railroad tracks in front of the girl were bending towards the left. There was something strange about the picture of the girl from the back. Not knowing what was out of balance, Ga Tzai stared and stared, almost as if he was about to rush off the platform and fall onto the tracks. A train approached the station, and Ga Tzai quickly ran into the first car.

At first, Ga Tzai thought it was the effect of the Agnes b. on the girl's left shoulder. It was a flat, trapezoidal, white trimmed, zippered, dark blue Agnes b. handbag, the kind of retro travel bag that young girls love, though not the common type a typical OL uses.[4] The bag was neither big nor small and was swelling in the center, but the contents were unclear. There was nowhere to sit inside the train. The girl was standing at the other end in front of the train door, looking out with both hands pressed against the window. Ga Tzai was standing just behind her, glaring at the center part of her hair at the back of her skull, then at her shiny nape, and then further down. Halfway down, around her waist, was where something began to look wrong. It was only then that Ga Tzai realized that the girl's spine was curved towards the left.

From then on, Ga Tzai punctually took that train to work everyday, but he still never saw Agnes b.'s face. In his mind, he could only envision her deformed back and that Agnes b. on her left side getting heavier and heavier. Of course Ga Tzai did not know the girl's name and could only in his heart call her Agnes b. Sometimes Ga Tzai would want to talk to Agnes b., but he never had an excuse. Whether at work or off work, he was always thinking affectionately of her viewed from the back. He even forgot to patch up his fight with Amy, and both of them continued to treat the other with cold silence. Yet Ga Tzai could not stop himself from dreaming of Agnes b.'s naked body, though only as seen from the back. He was constantly even imagining fingering each knob of her curved spine.



Eventually Ga Tzai's car was fixed, but he sold it in order to take the train everyday. One day, somebody at the last station jumped off the platform to commit suicide, and the train service had to be suspended. When it was clear that service would not be restored quickly, everyone on the platform gradually started to leave, leaving Ga Tzai and Agnes b. standing, as always, on the platform. Turning around to find that everyone had left, Agnes b. said softly: "Don't you remember me?" Ga Tzai jumped with shock, thinking he had heard it wrong, and tried hard to remember her face. Agnes b. continued: "My mom brought me to your clinic, four years ago, when I was fourteen. You told me to take off my clothes, to bend over for you to examine, and pressed your fingers all over my back. You said that my back was curved, that it was a birth defect, and that it was too late to be cured. You said that if I was a child, it could have still been straightened, but now it could only be treated with much exercise. You said that when I grew older, as my muscles and bones degenerated, it would cause back pain, it would affect my heart and lungs, and that if it became serious it would damage my nervous system and possibly lead to paralysis." Ga Tzai wanted to tell her that he was not a doctor but an accountant, but in the end just murmured to her, "It looks like you're fine now, don't worry." Agnes b. laughed a small laugh and in a voice that was neither a child's nor a woman's said: "At that time, your hand felt icy cold." Then, she strode towards the platform exit, her left hand still holding on to that Agnes b. bag that swayed and swayed in the air, lightly, as if nothing was in it.

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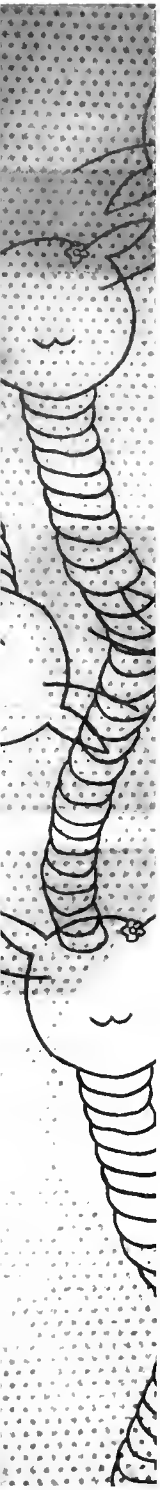
[4] OL is an abbreviation for an office lady.

Hello Kitty



When Tsui Kit Yuk started elementary school, the school required that everyone have English names. Her mom wrote "Kitty" in her file, saying that Kit Yuk's sharp eyes were like a little cat's. When Kit Yuk grew up, she didn't look much like a cat, nor was her personality particularly cat-like. But for every birthday and holiday, her friends would always give her Hello Kitty presents, because everyone knew that Kit Yuk was obsessed with Hello Kitty.

In fact, Kit Yuk was neither especially fond of, nor averse to, Hello Kitty. It was just that in grade four, when she placed third in the examinations, her mom gave her a Hello Kitty thermos as a reward. After that, for some reason, her friends started giving her Hello Kitty gifts, and to make things easier for them, Kit Yuk pretended to like Hello Kitty. So her friends also felt it was easy to be friends with Kit Yuk.

Over the course of the years Kit Yuk's circle of friends grew just like the pile of Hello Kitty gifts that filled up the house. Her friends from university, secondary, and primary school all kept in touch, regularly going out with her. Kit Yuk wasn't particularly outgoing; nor was she very talkative, but all her old classmates would remember her first, and thinking of her they would call her up. In university, Kit Yuk studied accounting. Her friends would joke that in the future she should work at the Sanrio Company, which manufactures the Hello Kitty products. Kit Yuk didn't really have an idea, and so after graduation she just went to one of the Big Six accounting firms to work.[5] She put away her Hello Kitty pencil cases and cell phone holders and dressed in business suits for work. During the first week of training, a man wearing a deep blue shirt and a gold tie said to her in the hallway, "Hi Kitty, I'm Stephen in the K group. We're in the same group." They shook hands.

Stephen was already a senior, and, from then on, each time Kit Yuk and Stephen were sent out on business together, he would very patiently help her along. Stephen was also not very talkative, the opposite of his eye-catching gold tie. Every morning he would say: "Hi, Kitty!" and then go back to work. Kit Yuk and Stephen started dating a year later. Kit Yuk and Stephen took seven days off to vacation in Japan, and all their friends were very envious. But the fact that Kit Yuk didn't go to Hello Kitty Land or to Tokyo Disney was unimaginable to everyone. When forced to explain what they really did on vacation, Kit Yuk was embarrassed. What she remembered were Hakone's misty hot springs and long slow days when the two of them were lost in existence.

Hello Kitty is not only timeless but is growing larger and stronger. The range of gifts is constantly expanding. Aside from conventional stationery, now one finds the Hello Kitty Toaster, Radio, Television, Camera, Cell Phone, Vacuum Cleaner, Electric Fan, Credit Card, blankets, furniture, PDAs, Car... everything. Also Hello Kitty as a panda, a chicken, a dog, as a cat but then not really as a cat. Those who are fans say that Hello Kitty is the only gift character without a mouth, a unique personality, existing in a different level. Those who don't like Hello Kitty say she is impassionate and expressionless.

When Kit Yuk and Stephen separated, her good friends all competed with each other to buy the newest Hello Kitty products, ostensibly for her birthday, but really to cheer her up. In a restaurant, Kit Yuk opened one present at a time to the bubbling sounds of excitement. She was very grateful to all of them. After dinner, Kit Yuk went to the restroom to fix her makeup. In front of the mirror her lipstick was getting thicker and thicker. Using tissue, she nearly wiped her mouth off.

That night before falling asleep, Kit Yuk drew lipstick mouths on all 126 Hello Kittys in her room. And then in her dreams she saw herself in the hotel in Hokane at dawn, putting on lipstick at the vanity table. A male stranger was sleeping on the tatami, her lipstick was getting too thick, and with one wipe of the tissue, her mouth disappeared.

Kit Yuk woke up with a start. The sky was half dark. Around her in all directions were Hello Kittys with no mouths.

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[5] The Big Six refers to the top six accounting firms of Hong Kong

Prada

Suki was sure she remembered correctly; she had spent 3,000 dollars on the Prada handbag.[6] That afternoon Nelson came over to her office lobby and waited for her. They went to a cafeteria for sandwiches, and there in the middle of a full lunchroom, he suggested they break up. Suki, surprisingly, remained calm, holding on to her sandwich, chewing one mouthful at a time. The breadcrumbs were scattered all over the table. That day after work, Suki went to the shopping mall that the cafeteria was located in and wandered in circle after circle until most of the businesses had closed, and she bought that Prada bag for no reason at all.

From then on, every evening after work, Suki would go by herself to that cafeteria and eat sandwiches. Even though Suki had lived alone since graduating from university, it wasn't until now that she knew what it was really like to be alone. Not that she couldn't see her friends or go home to her parents, but she chose to be alone, just so that she wouldn't have to explain herself to anyone.

The first person to discuss the Prada bag with Suki was her old schoolmate Fanny. That night Suki went to the cafeteria to eat sandwiches as usual. Holding her food in the queue, she realized when she got to the counter that there was no money in her wallet. She had just bought tickets to a musical that day. She tried very awkwardly to explain to the male cashier. He made a "don't say anything" gesture and whispered, "You're only short 10 dollars. It's on me!" Then he waved her away with his hand. Suki held on to the tray puzzled. After she found a seat, she turned her head to look at the boy, but he acted as though nothing had happened. Then she saw Fanny come into the cafeteria.

At that time Fanny was a reporter, her work clothes were T-shirts and jeans. Seeing Suki fully dressed in a matching white business suit, she clucked with admiration. And when she saw the Prada, she immediately said, "Genuine or fake?" Suki replied: "It's genuine." Fanny quipped back: "Of course it is, you're dressed up so well, how could you possibly carry fake stuff? How are you and Nelson? When are you shacking up?"

Suki and Nelson had started dating in their first year of university. They were together day and night, and had no doubts about the future: careers, marriage, and children. They would have never thought that after only one year of working in different offices, everything would change. When she actually thought about it, Suki wasn't that hurt; she could only smile bitterly. One day the boy at the sandwich shop noticed and asked her what she was smiling about. Her face turned red. Whenever this boy made Suki's sandwiches, he always did something extra, like secretly adding smoked salmon. Even though Suki was worried he would get in trouble, she enjoyed her sandwiches. When she tried to return the 10 dollars, he wouldn't take it, saying that treating a beautiful woman to lunch made him happy. Suki knew very well that she was at least three or four years older than him, but she was actually flattered by him, which made her even more embarrassed.

Later Suki was asked three more times whether her Prada was genuine or fake. The first was when she ran into a colleague and her boyfriend. Another time, it was an old high school classmate that asked. This classmate was now a teacher and was carrying the exact same Prada, though she said it was fake. After comparing it with Suki's real thing at length, neither of them could find much difference, and they both found it strange. The other time was when she went home for dinner. Her mother, while urging her to find a boyfriend, asked her where she had bought her fake Prada. She said that it was real. Her mother scolded her for being stupid and lectured her daughter to be as prudent as herself.

Suki never thought anything would happen with that boy, but one night she didn't see him in the cafeteria and missed him. She couldn't help but ask the other servers about him and found out that he had changed jobs. Suki's stomach was empty, but she couldn't eat and left the cafeteria leaving behind half a sandwich. She found him waiting for her outside. He asked, "Will you have a drink with me?" Suki thought for a moment, and said, "Sure, where?" The boy was wearing some trendy jeans, so with Suki in her gray suit, they looked like brother and sister. He gestured at her bag, saying, "I'll carry that for you." Suki hesitated, and he said, "Are you afraid I'll dirty your designer stuff?" Suki found him so corny that she thought it was funny and handed him the bag. "Just take it," she said, "It's only a fake. Bought it in Shenzhen for less than 200 dollars."

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[6] Hong Kong Dollars.

Black Tents

A shadow passes against the playful colors and intricate patterns of a *faience* portal of Safavid Isfahan. The shadow is echoed in form by many more: large black triangles with feet that carry them across the scene. Not a shadow, but a black screen, a surface that has been swept around a woman's body to form what is not simply an item of clothing but an extended skin, a tent, an architecture. This is the *chador*: a large semi-circle of black cloth designed to cover a woman's body, held at her chin with one hand, leaving a small triangle of herface visible.

The chador is one manifestation of *hijab* in women's clothing. Hijab has come to be equated with an Islamic dress code and is often rendered in English as "veiling."[1] In Iran women wear the chador in mosques and in state buildings. Although a less inhibiting form of covering such as a scarf and long loose coat is considered acceptable outside such buildings, many women choose to wear the chador in all spaces outside the home. Even in the home—wherever "forbidden" eyes are present.[2] This extends to the presence of the camera eye that might distribute a woman's image to others outside the space.

Etymologically, the Persian *chador* is derived from the Turkish word *chadir*, which in Turkish still means tent. The chador is thus conceptualized as a mobile home that facilitates a woman's movement around the city and her dealings with men. It essentially describes an extended boundary that assures that she always occupies a private space. In Iran this black tent may be identified not only as architecture but perhaps also as a monumental architecture that supports a multiplicity of inscriptions. The chador is a politically and historically defined surface, one that yields alternate readings dependent on the political position of the reader. It attracts voyeuristic attention from the West, where it is viewed as "exotic." Yet within the particular Islamic society in which it is worn, the chador aims to act as a foil to the masculine visual regard. A woman inhabiting this "screen," upon which not only ideology but also desire is projected, is politicized within a global context despite, or because of, the original local objective that the chador renders her *neutralized*.

The correlation of the Safavid building entered from that *faience* portal and the moving black tent lies in their operation as sites of memory and political intent. As maintained by Henri Lefebvre, "Monumentality... always embodies and imposes a clearly intelligible message. It says what it wants to say—yet it hides a good deal more: being political, military, and ultimately fascist in character, monumental buildings mask the will to power and the arbitrariness of power beneath signs and surfaces which claim to express collective will and collective thought."[3] The chador operates as such a surface, fluidly masking multiple "wills to power" that have

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[1] *Hijab* denotes a variety of objects that conceptually participate in a function of separation and/or division: a partition, a veil, a curtain, a membrane. It is also used as an abstract noun—veiling, concealing, also modesty, bashfulness. In the Qur'an, the word hijab is not used to refer to a women's dress code but rather to an earlier, abstract concept of modesty

[2] The presence of men who are not defined as "mahrem"—a term that will be elaborated later.

[3] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, UK and Cambridge, USA: Blackwell, 1991): 143.

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tramped the stages of Iranian history, although not all Iranians subscribe to the clerics' claims that the chador expresses collective will. Collective memories, however, are woven into the black of the fabric of the tent, spanning a few hundred years.

The chador is an urban phenomenon that appeared in Iran as a result of women's removal from the public realm "with the transition from tribal and feudal communities into expanded urbanism caused by... capitalism."[4] With the establishment of Pahlavi rule in 1925, Iran engaged in a process of westernization equated with modernization, within which the adoption of western clothing was a central symbolic and practical component. The urban work force would be increased by enabling women to participate, her hands liberated from the task of holding her chador. Debate on the hijab burgeoned; "anti-clerical intellectuals" ridiculed the chador as un-modern,[5] while an equally virulent opposing voice argued for its necessity. Women expressed opinion on both sides of the debate: some despised it as a form of oppression; others found in it a source of pride and an index of identity.

In 1936 Reza Shah outlawed the chador, ordering soldiers to tear them from the bodies of women who insisted on wearing them. Ayatollah Khomeini would later call this action "the Movement of Bayonets."[6] When the Shah abdicated in 1941, his edict was rescinded, at which point "women who had felt humiliated by the Shah's dress code put on black chadors and flaunted them in the streets, reveling in the freedom to wear what they wished."[7] The chador had become, and would remain, a political emblem.[8]

During the late sixties and seventies, inhabiting the chador became a form of personal expression and protest against the Shah and what was seen as western cultural contamination. The chador was assumed by many previously unveiled women; theirs was a political and cultural occupation, in some cases not even remotely religious. Yet despite these decades of pro-veiling activity, upon the victory of the Revolution, Ayatollah Khomeini was not immediately able to enforce the wearing of the chador. His institution of the Islamic Dress Code in 1983 was the culmination of a four-year incremental process, accompanied by the protests of many women. Many continue to fight against it, wearing hijab out of necessity and fully aware that it is a politicized occupation. Some inhabit the chador as another type of architecture, a prison: "the veil is literally a mobile prison, a terrifying form of solitary confinement for life."[9] The various adaptations of hijab by women in Teheran, such as the shortening and tightening of their *rupushes* (coats) and the invention of attractive and revealing ways to tie a headscarf, may constitute resistance.

In 1995 the Leader of the Islamic Republic, Ayatollah Khomeini, stated that "there is no doubt that the chador is a desirable cover and among Iranian costumes is considered the best hijab, but religiously no specific dress has been designated as necessary cover for women, and making the chador mandatory has no ground."[10] His comment reveals the Iranian clerics' awareness that they cannot justify the chador (or "veil-

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[4] Hamid Dabashi, "The Gun and the Gaze; Shirin Neshat's Photography," *Women of Allah: Shirin Neshat* (Torino: Marco Noire Editore, 1997): unpaginated.

[5] Paul Sprachman, "The Poetics of Hijab in the Satire of Iraj Mirza," *Iran and Iranian Studies: Essays in honour of Iraj Afshar*, ed. Kambiz Eslami (Princeton, NJ Zagros Press, 1998): 341

[6] See Sprachman, 345.

[7] Memoir of Farman Farmanian quoted in Sprachman, 347.

[8] The relationship of politics and the veil was already demonstrated early in the nineteenth century when Tahereh Qurral al-Ayn threw off her veil in order to "engage in radical political activities." See Hamid Dabashi, op. cit.

[9] Farzaneh Milani quoted in Anne McCann-Baker, ed. *Stories by Iranian Women Since the Revolution* (Austin, Texas: Center for Middle Eastern Studies The University of Texas at Austin, 1991): 13.

[10] *Iran News* 03/14/95 quoted on www.netiran.com.

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ing" of any sort) on a Qur'anic basis.[11] Nevertheless, the chador is retained and considered "the best hijab." Since Islam does not prescribe the chador, the rationale for its continued enforcement in Iran must be found elsewhere—in its function as a site of memory and symbolism. It had become, with the Revolution, a form of mobile monument.

As elaborated by Paidar, the position of women in society and thus their legal rights and appearance, constituted a central issue in the formation of an identity for the Islamic State.[12] Recognizing this, even the more liberal clerics, while opposing enforced Islamization, nevertheless supported Ayatollah Khomeini's call for the chador. Pro-democracy cleric Ayatollah Taleghani maintained that the chador should be embraced voluntarily since "we want to show that there has been a revolution, a profound change."[13] The message of a profound change was directed not just to the citizens of the new state but also to those outside, who had provided the model against which the change had taken place.

The West has twice been implicated in the politicizing of the chador. In the discourse of cultural imperialism, the chador was marked first as a negative symbol of backwardness against modern Europe, and then as a positive nationalist symbol of vulnerable tradition. Since 1983, Western media has condemned the Revolution's enforcement of the veil, seldom venturing beyond a superficial critique of veiling as a mode of women's oppression.[14] Furthermore, the chador maintains an exoticizing tendency—emphasizing a difference between an "us," the West, and a "them," Iranians. It is this function of the chador as an index of difference, representing an identity in a polarized environment that constitutes the operative motivation behind the Iranian clerics' continued call for its use, as demonstrated by Ayatollah Taleghani's justification.

The discourse that analyzes and supports the need for the chador is typically centered on vision. Covering is necessary, as men have eyes. "Eyes are considered not to be passive organs like ears which merely gather information... eyes are active, even invasive organs, whose gaze is also construed to be inherently aggressive."[15] Hijab can therefore be primarily considered a visual prophylactic. Yet such a model does not fully explain the chador. Hijab is manifested in various forms in different societies, and the chador is not the most conservative. Photographs taken at the beginning of the twentieth century by Gatian de Clérambault docu-

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[11] His statement echoes those made by the revolutionaries in 1979.

[12] Parvin Paidar, *Women and the Political Process in Twentieth-Century Iran* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[13] Ayatollah Taleghani quoted in Paidar, 233. Paidar explains how "This profound change was to be marked by the appearance and behavior of women."

[14] Iranian-American CNN Correspondent Christiane Amanpour donned a headscarf to interview President Khatami in 1998, but in her CNN documentary "Revolutionary Journey" two years later, she ripped the scarf from the head of her unsuspecting cousin *on camera*

[15] Hamid Naficy, "Veiled Vision/Powerful Presences: Women in Post-revolutionary Iranian Cinema," *In the Eye of the Storm: Women in Post-revolutionary Iran*, ed. Afkhami and Friedl (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1994): 141. Ayatollah Ali Meshkini explains it thus: "Looking is rape by means of the eyes... whether the vulva admits or rejects it, that is, whether actual sexual intercourse takes place or not."

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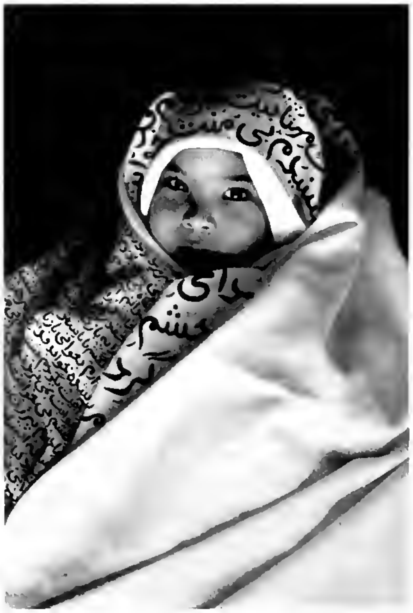
ment, for example, the more extensive covering of Moroccan women's hijab, which was also far more articulated, ironically increasing the effects of those apparently seductive voluptuous curves of folds (Fig. 2). The Iranian Dress Code demands black, a dictate that departs from the lively colors and patterns still worn by women in rural Iran. The effect of this black is shadow; it creates a negation. In photographs, women appear as holes.

Epigraphs
The faience of that Safavid portal in Isfahan, before which a black shadow sits, bears the words of the Qur'an and testifies to the greatness of a particular patron Shah. The script is articulated in a decorative configuration, rendering it difficult to decipher. For those who untangle the dates and phrases, both religious and secular, the epigraphy provides clues to the monument's purpose and period: political, religious, and functional. Before operating as a historical document, these same "clues" established the monument as "a collective mirror more faithful than any personal one."[16]

A black screen cannot display an image that is projected onto it. Perhaps the black of the chador should be considered not as a void but as the result of an accumulation of inscriptions or projections so dense that they become solid—an ostensible black "hole" that is in fact saturated with intention, memory, and meaning. The *Women of Allah* photographs of Shirin Neshat support this interpretation (Fig. 3). White sheets cloak a woman, the artist herself, sometimes with her son or with a gun. Upon the photographs, within the boundaries of the sheet, poems of Forugh Farokhzad (1935-67) are written in black script. The script follows the simple folds of the sheet, suggesting that the words have been applied onto the sheet itself rather than onto the surface of the photograph. The gun sometimes shown at the side of the figure is perhaps the instrument or *qalam* that writes this inscription. Such an instrument evokes stories wrought by the women of the revolution, stories of violence in the name of Islam. The chador, more than just a uniform, was their site of resistance and remains the slate of their struggle, bearing the marks of their beliefs manifested in action (Fig. 4).

One photograph depicts the face of a child peering from within a white sheet, the script circling the child's face in two different scales (Fig. 5). The limited area of dense script suggests that the text is incomplete, that the writing will grow, will spread upon the whiteness that covers the child's body. In other photographs the sheet is



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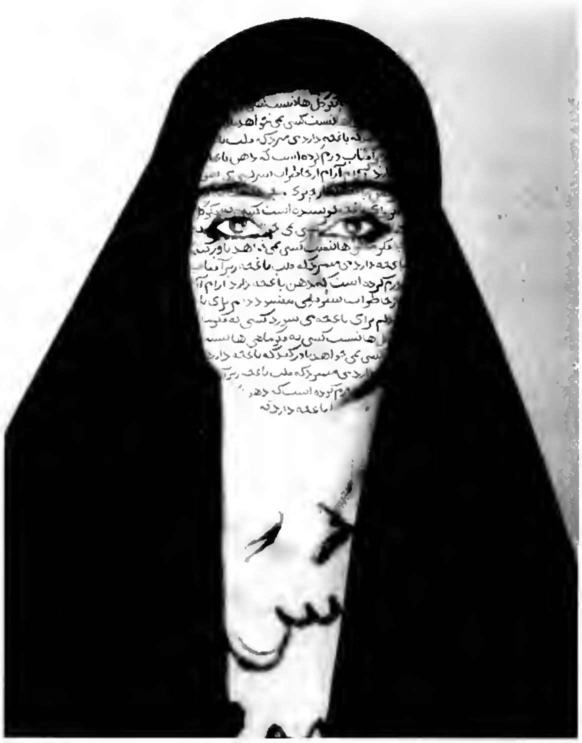
[16] Lefebvre, 220.

black, a chador (Fig. 6). The words have crawled beyond the confines of the now-black sheet onto the skin of the artist. In some of these images the script wanders with the logic of the bends of limb or fold of skin as it also conforms to the shape of the white sheet. In other photographs, the script is flat upon Neshat's face as a layer unattached to the skin (Fig. 7). Only her eyes remain without inscription. The text appears to be a projection, yet the woman's mouth is closed shut, sealed with what has been projected.

Neshat's inscriptions of Farokhzad's poems—rather than the words of the revolution or the Qur'an—complicates a reading that her once-white tent is simply a site of oppression. Farokhzad remains a pioneering figure for women artists in Iran. Her sensual poetry effects an unveiling, an exploration of the inner space of a woman's thoughts and desires. The juxtaposition of her words with Neshat's tented figures challenges both a simplistic critique of the Muslim woman as passive, mercilessly bound, and gagged by the clerics' chador and also the reading that as a self-determined woman she is struggling to escape this tent. While inhabiting the tent, she is inscribed with desires of her own making, and this inscription twists the weave of her chador, altering our perception of it. The chador, a political battlefield and site of resistance, is also a potential site of poetic pleasures.



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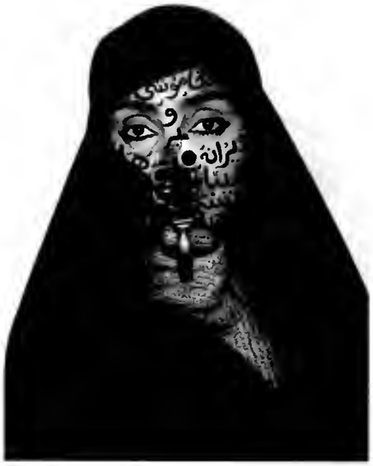

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The epigraphy presented by Neshat supplements the inscriptions commonly found in contemporary Iran. Maintaining some continuity with the Safavid portal, these utilize Qur'anic verse and identify contemporary power with quotes and maxims of the Revolution (Fig. 8). In an innovative turn, decorative schemes employ the image of Ayatollah Khomeini, the most visible symbol of the Revolution (Fig. 9). Numerous walls bear the giant faces of martyrs of the revolution, men killed in the Iran-Iraq war (Fig. 10). Guns and hands with tulips (the symbol of martyrdom) are also popularly erected. These images and texts, hovering somewhere between graffiti and billboard, constitute a form of decoration independent of its supporting structure. Any surface may be adorned—freestanding wall or building of any function; the architecture is treated as an assemblage of canvases that circumscribes an irrelevant interior.

Functioning as a site of memory and representation of power, these images and texts might constitute a contemporary Iranian monument, articulating a monumentality characterized by surface. Social space in Iran, however, is not equivalent to a western "postmodern" space, of which the billboard may be a manifestation. A

monument both embodies a society's or a hegemony's concept of space and also imposes it; in Iran, the chador, not the billboard, meticulously performs these roles.

Spatial Habit

Henri Lefebvre's triadic structure of space and his discussion of the monument usefully demonstrate the monumental potential of the chador. Lefebvre distinguishes between perceived space (*spatial practice*), conceived space (*representations of space*), and lived space (*representational spaces*).[17] Hijab is determined by an "Islamic" conceptualization of space that is essentially moral, generated by a binary categorization of familial and sexual relations, the *mahrem and namahrem.*[18] Mahrem, meaning unlawful or forbidden, refers to a consort, an intimate, a family member with whom it is unlawful to marry, but before whom a woman is permitted to appear unveiled. Namahrem (not-*mahrem*) refers to those who may not see her unveiled, strangers. The fundamental moral opposition, mahrem/namahrem, structures a concept of space in terms of who may be present and who may not, describing space conceptually as either forbidden or permitted depending on who is occupying it.[19] Hijab provides the curtain of physical separation. Use of the chador effectively limits the forbidden space to the interior of the tent, liberating all other space for occupation by men who are namahrem. Indicating the monument's relationship to power, the prescribing/proscribing function of the chador is characteristic of Lefebvre's monumental space: "Such a space is determined by what may take place there, and consequently by what may not take place there (prescribed/ proscribed; scene/ obscene)."[20]

The social practice of separation, the utilizing of hijab, is an example of Lefebvre's *spatial practice*. "The spatial practice of a society secretes that society's space; it propounds and presupposes it, in a dialectical interaction; it produces it slowly as it masters and appropriates it."[21] This interaction is demonstrated well in Iranian society where the moral code of segregation is a spatial construct both in concept and in practice. This interaction between the concept and practice of hijab produces a *representational space*, which is also served by the chador.[22] As already noted by the clerics who call for its use as a symbol, the chador not only represents the conceived space of a specific moral code but also a particular hegemony.

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[17] As Lefebvre points out, this triad of spaces will not be cleanly applicable and may interact fluidly in different societies.

[18] That is, the representation of space, "the conceptualized space, the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers, and social engineers." Lefebvre, 38. The social engineer in this case is the Iranian cleric, following Iranian tradition and religious law to concretize the concept in practice.

[19] Returning to an earlier example, if a camera is used in a harem, the women are likely to put on their chador. The forbidden space, once extended to the bounds of the entire room, is effectively contracted into the space of each woman's tent.

[20] Lefebvre, 224

[21] Ibid., 38.

[22] I am suggesting that the representation of space reflects hijab's meaning as *modesty*—a modesty grounded in the moral code structured by the familial and sexual relations noted above. Spatial practice is a practice of hijab (modesty) utilizing hijab, this time denoting curtain, physical divider and Islamic dress code.

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Moreover, the chador is another skin, a place of inhabitation such as a home. As a *lived space* it is a "place."[23] It is a place of security, a place of liberation, and resistance. A place of domesticity, of camouflage. As a place of inhabitation, the chador alters a local geography. The space of the chador is not limited to those who are covered in its folds. The assemblage of black tents constructs a type of sub-city of fluid walls that may be occupied just as is any city constructed of individual stationary buildings. Exterior surfaces congregate and disperse; the exterior spaces circumscribed by these surfaces, although never constant, assert established social regulations for inhabitation. Those who inhabit the interior of the chador perceive the interstice of screen and skin, and those who dwell among the tents perceive their own distance from she who is inside.

> *For millennia, monumentality took in all the aspects of spatiality that we have identified above: the perceived, the conceived, and the lived; representations of space and representational spaces... Of this social space, which embraced all the above-mentioned aspects while still according each its proper place, everyone partook and partook fully—albeit, naturally, under the conditions of a generally accepted Power and a generally accepted Wisdom. The monument thus effected a "consensus," and this in the strongest sense of the term rendering it practical and concrete. The element of repression in it and the element of exaltation could scarcely be disentangled.*[24]

Women's dress continues to constitute a barometer of the political climate in Iran. The monuments of the revolution, fashioned, as monuments are, on an "effected consensus," are beginning to peel. The first fashion show since the Revolution was recently held in Teheran, and advertisers of the event erected billboards displaying the image of women in "fashionable" hijab on a scale that evokes Ayatollah Khomeini or the martyrs (Fig. 11). These billboards, like the chador two decades ago, signal that there has been a change. Whether it is profound or not remains to be seen.

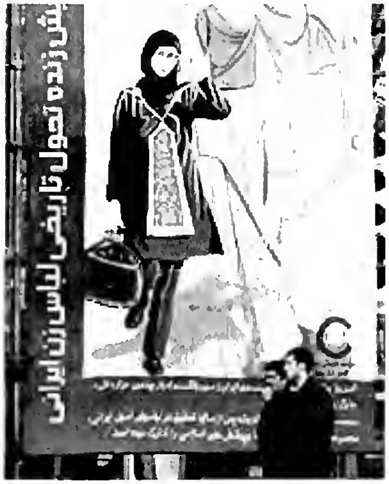

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Illustration Credits

Frontispiece: Still from *Rapture*, Shirin Neshat, 1999.

Figure 2: One of Gatian de Clérambault's images of Moroccan women.

Figure 3: Photograph from Shirin Neshat's *Women of Allah* series.

Figure 4: Woman with uzi at an anti-American demonstration. Photo J. Javid.

Figures 5-7: Photograph from Shirin Neshat's *Women of Allah* series.

Figure 8: The Arabic reads: "There is one God and Khomeini is the leader." Photo J. Javid.

Figure 9: A mural in a southern town near Ahvaz. Photo J. Javid.

Figure 10: A martyr in the Iran-Iraq war. Photo Nader Davoodi.

Figure 11: Billboard advertising the first fashion show in Iran since the revolution. Photo Associated Press.

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[23] The correlation of "place" and "lived space" is pointed out by Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, USA and Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

[24] Lefebvre, 220.

Pornament

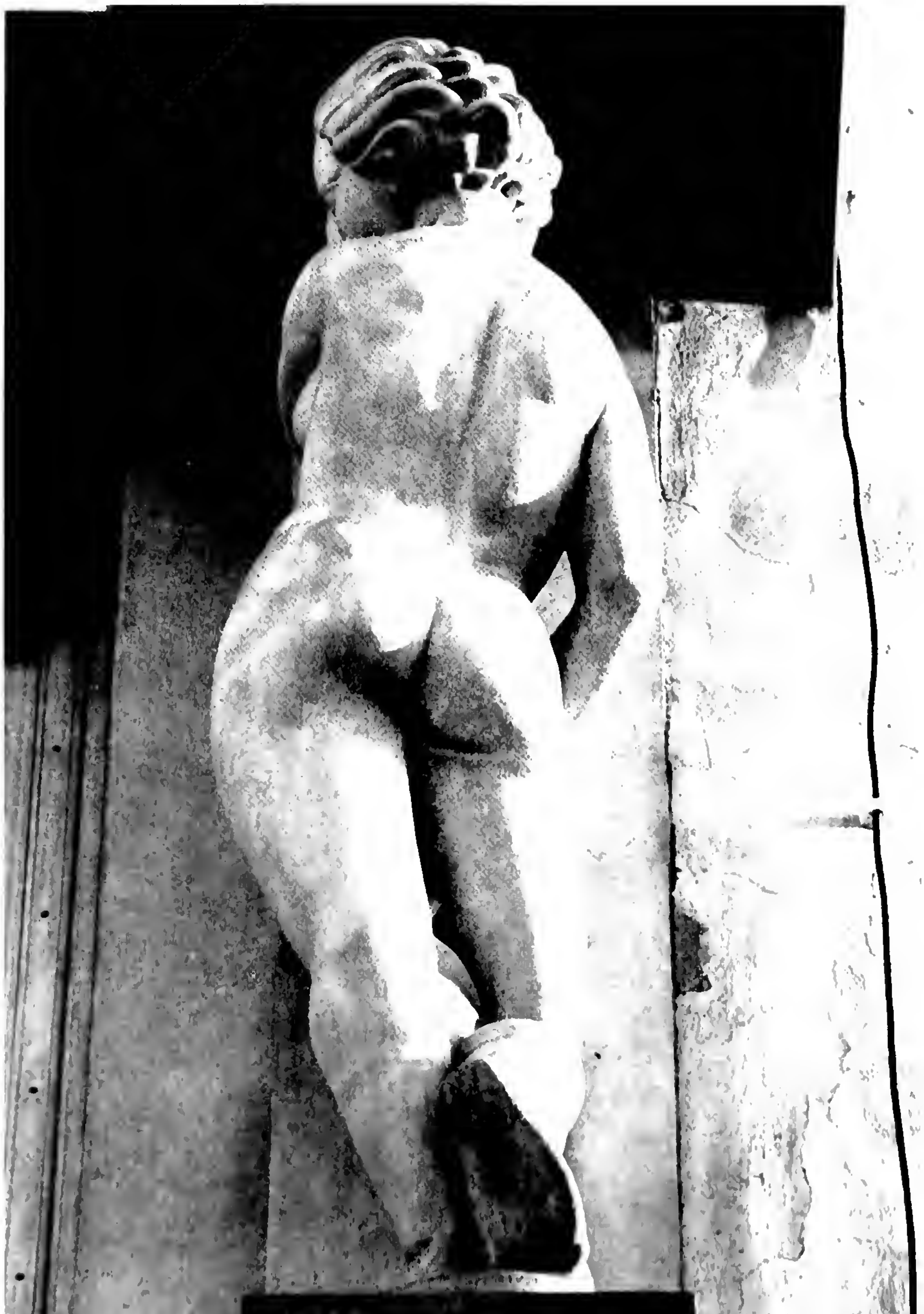
The ornament of choice on Prague's renowned Secessionist buildings was the nude female figure. In positions of flirtation, shame, boredom, diffidence, or nonchalance, these figures personified the kind of beauty that turn-of-the-century architecture was expected to provide its audience.

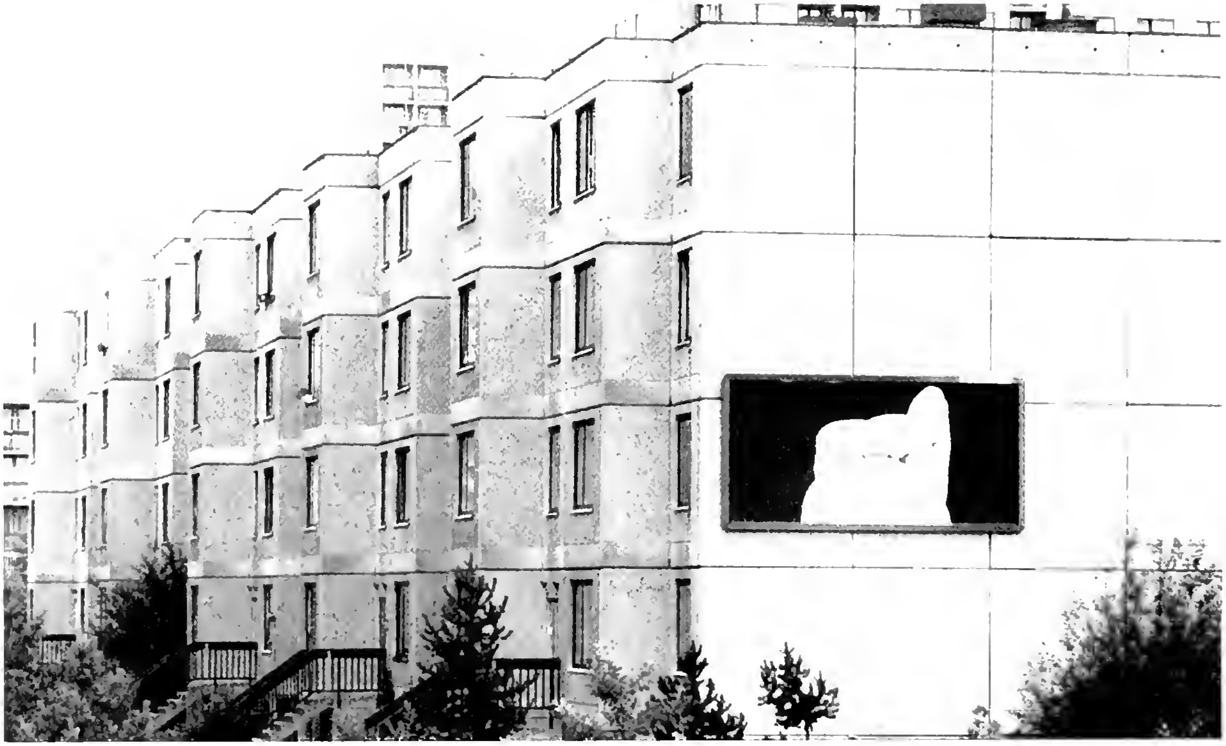
Architectural nudity was transformed with modern architecture's criminalization of ornamentation. The literal nudity of the Secessionist figure was replaced by the phenomenal nudity of abstract and unornamented architectural form. No longer decorated with bodies, modern architecture itself became a body; but the preferred state of that body remained the same—nude.

In Prague, as in most other cities in Eastern Europe, the prefabricated apartment block was the principal solution to the problem of housing during the socialist era. These blocks were deployed one after another in vast housing estates ringing the city's periphery with minute variations. Invisible to Prague's audience of visitors, prefabricated blocks now house one-third of the city's inhabitants.

The architectural nudity of the prefabricated apartment block, unlike that of Secessionist figures or modernist monuments, has rarely been regarded as beautiful. Before the Velvet Revolution, these blocks were simply endured. Afterwards, sporadic attempts have been made to revitalize the blocks by means of cheerfully colored paint, flower boxes on balconies, and the like. These interventions, however, tend to do little but emphasize the overwhelming bleakness of the blocks

Herscher

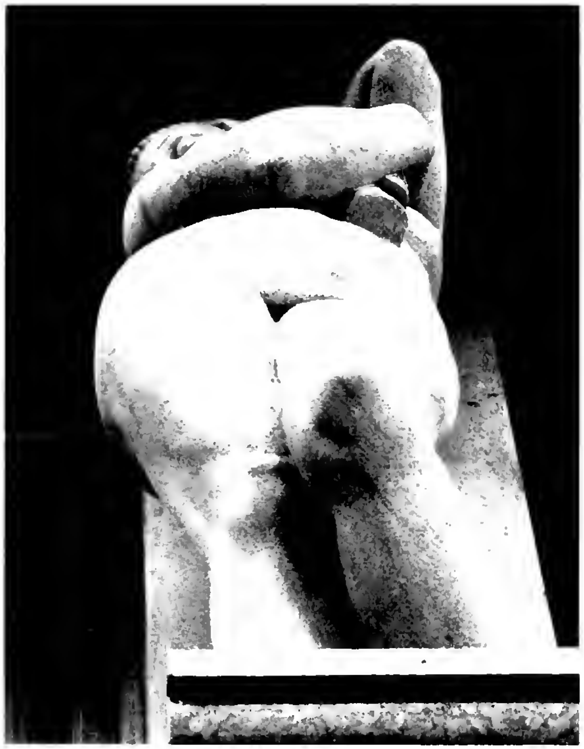




and their otherwise neglected landscape. This bleakness cannot easily be remedied; the lack of ornamentation on the blocks is less a cause of their aesthetic inadequacy than an effect of the impoverishment of the public realm that gave rise to them.

The most significant transformation of the prefabricated block has not been driven by architectural considerations but by the workings of the so-called "free market": the blank walls of the blocks have increasingly been conceived as conspicuously unoccupied property and utilized accordingly as locations for billboards. These billboards advertise the hitherto-unavailable products that the post-socialist consumer can dream about, if not purchase. The nudity that endowed Secessionist architecture with beauty is thus used now to sell automobiles, furniture, beer, cosmetics, and consumer electronics.

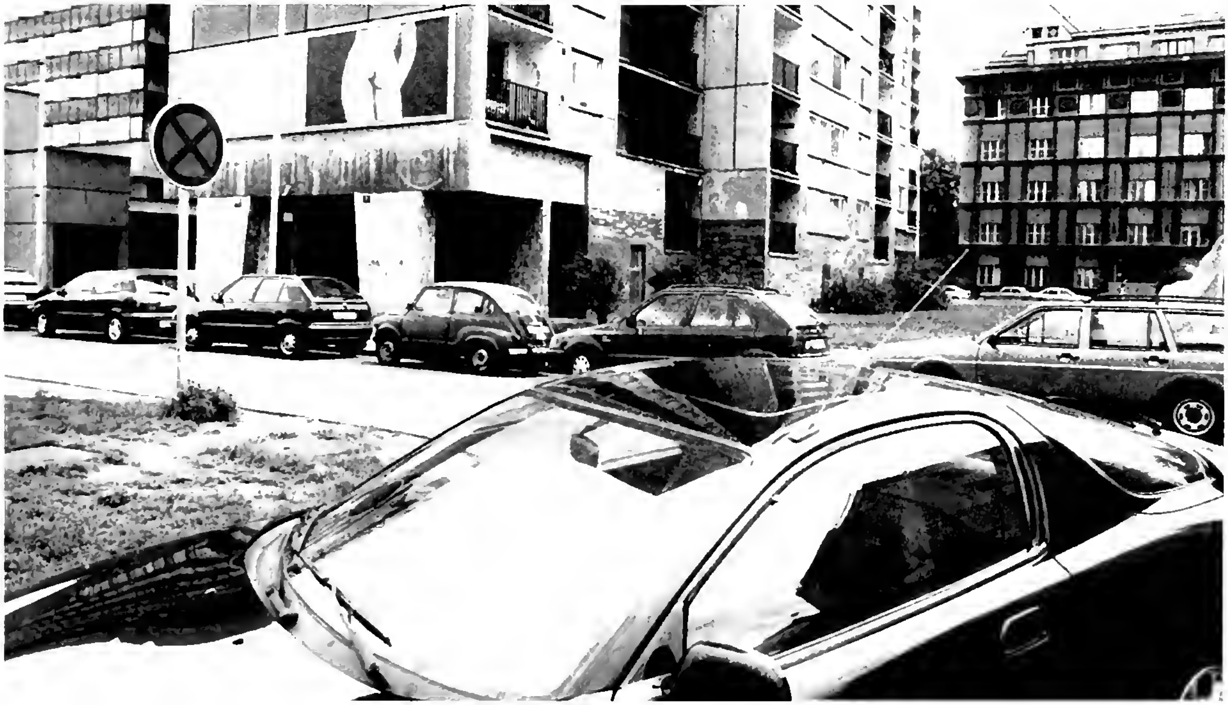
This project was an attempt to explore the relations between architectural ornament and advertisement: the

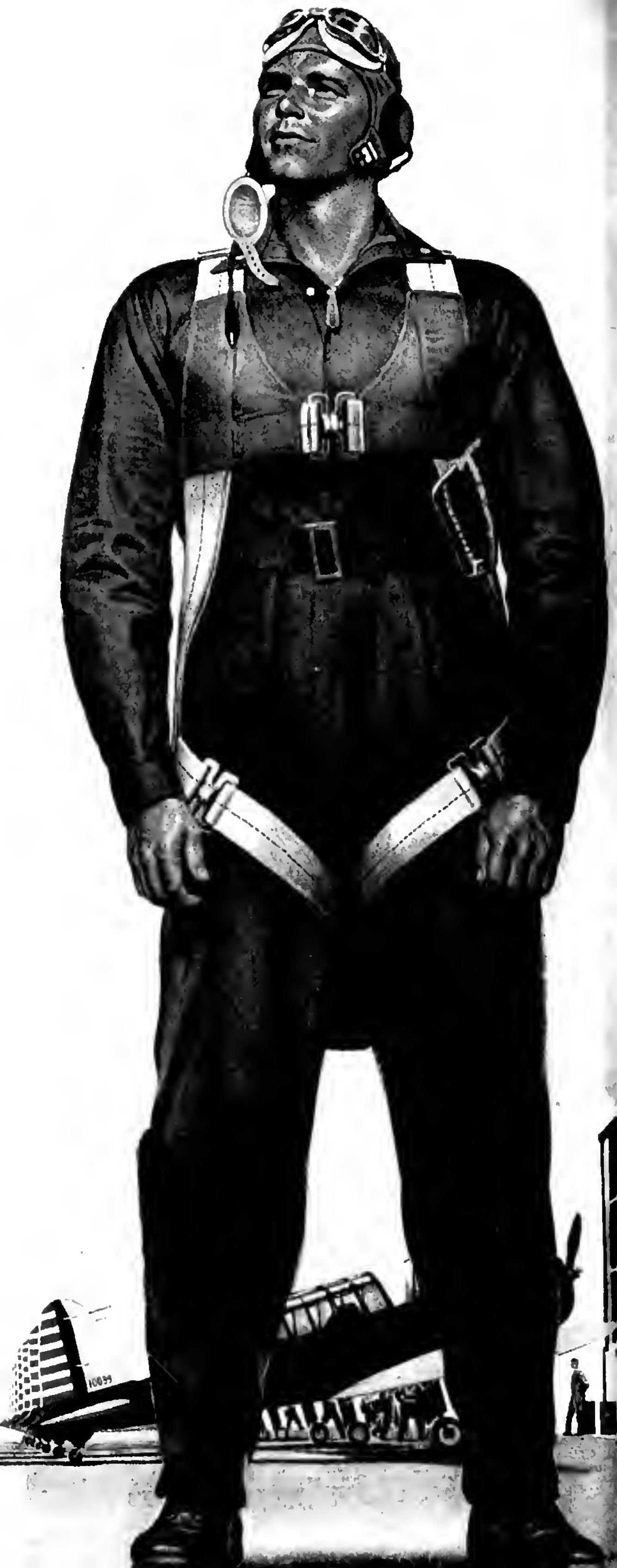


ornament as advertisement, the advertisement as ornament, the solicitation of desires, and the modalities of satisfactions.

Five prefabricated apartment blocks were chosen, each lying in a different housing estate on Prague's periphery. The billboards on these blocks were regarded as potential ornaments. To realize this potential, images of nude female figures ornamenting Secessionist buildings in the center of Prague were placed on these billboards for one month. These images were cropped in such a way as to foreground their ornamental status as public representations of private parts.

It is hard to say whether these billboards advertised anything. Perhaps it was the reflection—stated explicitly by Loos and now probably banal—of ornament's eroticism. Perhaps the simultaneous efficacy and pathos of normalizing advertisement as the default mode of social communication. Or perhaps beauty's easy transmutation, or always already prior existence, as something approaching pornography.





The man we look up to!

This we do know: in the world's every hour of crisis there rises a particular man or group of men who are placed there by destiny to defy, to fight and ultimately to defeat a common foe. It is so with us today.

We are challenged nowhere so strongly as in the *air*. And rising to give the answer are thousands upon thousands of our young men—Galahads and Lancelots of holy purpose, their Grail the freedom of mankind, their steeds of steel wheeling in deadly tournament amid the meteoric dust.

No one has ever lived who knew the equal of their courage. And no people have ever had a stouter barricade against a foe. As our aviators fling themselves into that ultimate and decisive battleground—the sky, soaring with them are the hopes of the Democracies of the world.

They are not only fighting; they are "going to school" in a new realm where the scale of man's thinking is large. They see at first hand how small is the world, how easy to fly around it, how petty and futile its fences and boundaries, how inadequate its old yardsticks of distance, and how pinched is yesterday's concept of geography.

Their heroic task accomplished, these airmen will be returning to a new world of their own making, to the world *we* shall live in tomorrow—the world of the air as well as of land and water. The Vultee trainers in which they were cradled and the fighters and bombers in which they utilized their skill will sire planes of Peace. And the universal air will vibrate with their promise of things better far than we have known.

VULTEE

VULTEE AIRCRAFT, INC. • VULTEE FIELD, CALIFORNIA
Builders of Trainers, Dive Bombers and Fighters
Member, Aircraft War Production Council, Inc.

Vultee
"VITAL TO VICTORY"

The Body of the "New Man"

The American aviator Charles Lindbergh's maiden transatlantic flight on May 21, 1927, provoked widespread public and media attention on both sides of the Atlantic.[1] Almost overnight, Lindbergh was a cult figure, becoming *Time Magazine*'s "Man of the Year" in 1927. Did Lindbergh's flight simply represent an occasion to revitalize the cultural phenomenon of hero-worship in the age of mass culture, or was it a triumph of the machine, the success of an industrial society? A critical look at what appeared to be a mass celebration of technological progress in an era of unbridled utopianism reveals a startling social sentiment. As much as it expressed mankind's victory over physical barriers, Lindbergh's flight was also a defining moment in the search for an ideal male American type.[2] I will argue that this search was consistent with the cultural codification of the "New Man" in the 1920s as the epitome of a certain kind of body. The lightness of the New Man's body offered to interwar visionary aesthetes theoretical avenues to speculate on the conjuncture of body and space.

But for a moment, I will return to Lindbergh. Characteristic of a time marked by technological utopianism, the ideal American type could have been found in the image of a technologized superhero, popularized at the time by H. G. Wells and Hugo Gernsback's science fiction series, *Amazing Stories*. Instead, the actual figure of Lindbergh gave rise to an archetypal image of man. Alone, indomitable, and apparently without any materialistic goals in his heroic pursuit, Lindbergh fueled the image of the archetypal hero, rising against nature's force with sheer physical power. *Survey* magazine harked back to Walt Whitman's poem for the title of an article on Lindbergh, "O Pioneer," thereby evoking the masculine image of the frontiersman in the American West.[3] Lindbergh projected the image of an ideal American man, endowed with an immaculate physique and intense eyes fixed, as it were, on the future. This image gave new commercial validity to a tradition of equating the healthy man with material success in interwar corporate advertisements.

In 1942, fifteen years after Lindbergh's transatlantic flight, an advertisement by the aircraft manufacturing company, Vultee, demonstrated the endurance of the Lindbergh archetype. The Vultee advertisement in the October issue of *Fortune* featured a larger-than-life image of Lindbergh, accompanied by unabashedly masculinist rhetoric: "The man we look *up* to.... In the world's every hour of crisis there rises a particular man or group of men who are placed there by destiny to defy, to fight and ultimately to defeat a common foe."[4] With an uncanny facial resemblance to Lindbergh, the aviator in the Vultee image stands tall, rendering insignificant the very machine that propels him into the sky (Frontispiece). The emphasis is not on any kind of aviation gadgetry, as that would undermine the consciously orchestrated "Gulliverization" of the aviator's body.

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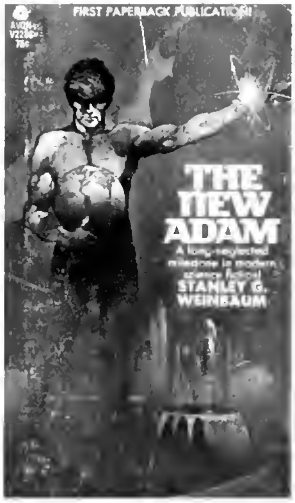
[1] See Kenneth S. Davis, *The Hero, Charles A. Lindbergh and the American Dream* (Garden City, New York: 1959).

[2] John William Ward, "The Meaning of Lindbergh's Flight," *Red, White, and Blue: Men, Books, and Ideas in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1969): 26.

[3] Ibid., 27.

[4] "Advertisement for Vultee Aircraft, Inc.," Fortune 24.4 (October, 1942).



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The bigness of the body is intended to miniaturize everything else around it, thereby provoking awe in the viewer. The message of the advertisement is clear: the classic male body was to be the trope of a new age. Anything superficial on this body would not only be redundant, but would negate the premise on which this male body rests.

Let me illustrate the point with another example. The cover page of Stanley Weinbaum's widely read science fiction novel, *The New Adam* (1939), shows a perfectly chiseled masculine man, rendered larger than life by his juxtaposition with the silhouetted futuristic city that he himself had presumably built (Fig. 2).[5] Not only are the skyscrapers of the city dwarfed by the towering naked body of the "New Adam," but even the globe held in his mighty hand becomes a mere toy. The other hand stretches, with a symbolic gesture, to the scientific obsession of the era: the atomic structure. The semantic complexity of the image lies in its celebration of the virtues of a well-established iconography of the male body by exploiting an instance of contemporary technological development. Although he is the protagonist of a technological utopia, the New Adam himself is represented in the most archetypal image of the male body. He is just a body, devoid of all superficiality, of any sort of earthly redundancy. Any type of covering would defeat the very sense of the renewal of civilization that the nude body conveys. The nude body of the New Adam, then, refers to the masculinist tradition of figural representation as well as to the sense of a heroic beginning that undergirds the notion of a new civilization. The New Adam inhabits a conceptual liminality, simultaneously returning to the most original state and advancing to an extremely evolved condition.

One may ask, why these conflicting investments in the male body during the heyday of machine aesthetics and science fiction? To answer this question, we first need to explore the notion of the New Man that had already gained wide currency in American thought by the early 1920s.[6] The emphasis on a highly evolved, fit body was central to the New Man discourse. In the first decades of the twentieth century, belief in Darwinian evolutionary principles regarding the progress of species and of man enjoyed renewed vitality. These beliefs had filtered through Spencerian and neo-Lamarckian ideas of racial and sexual hierarchy, as well as the eugenic ideology of an engineered human body. Eugenicists abhorred and rejected all sorts of presumed defects of the body as nothing other than outward manifestations of inner genetic malfunctions. Instead, they sought functional, hygienic, and physically fit bodies as the basis of a superior future race. Eugenicists believed that the object of natural evolution—the man—could become an object of rational selection by means of controlled breeding. They hoped to thereby technologize the fundamental balancing feature of the natural law of evolution and to improve society through gradual elimination of the unfit.[7]

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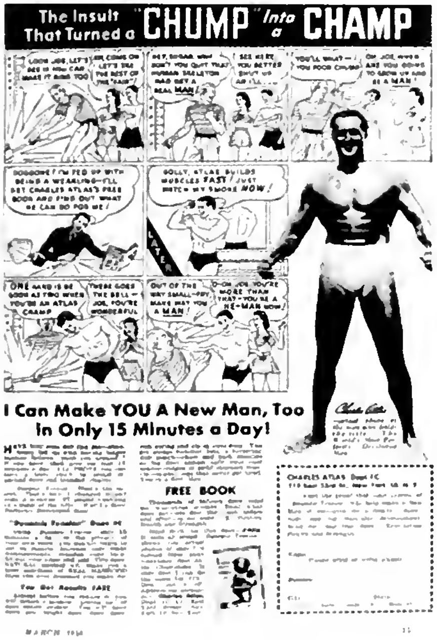
[5] Stanley G. Weinbaum, *The New Adam* (New York Avon Books, 1939).

[6] See Ralph E. Flanders, "The New Age and the New Man," *Toward Civilization*, Charles Beard ed., (London: Longmans, Green, 1930): 21-37; Michael S. Kimmel, *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: The Free Press, 1996); Anthony E. Rotundo, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity from the Revolution to the Modern Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1993); Wolfgang Pehnt, "The 'New Man' and the Architecture of the Twenties," *Social Utopias of the Twenties: Bauhaus, Kibbutz and the Dream of the New Man*, J. Fiedler ed. (Wupperthal: Muller & Busmann Press, 1995).

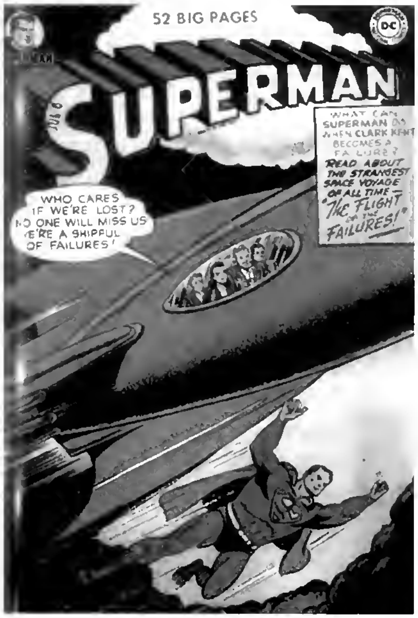
[7] Marouf Arif Hasian, Jr., *The Rhetoric of Eugenics in Anglo-American Thought* (Athens, Georgia: The University of Georgia Press, 1996). The eugenicist argument attracted widespread support during the 1910s and 1920s from government agencies, corporate organizations, and various social groups eager to preserve a supposed national racial purity. Large corporate organizations played a prominent role in developing and funding eugenics research. For instance, the Rockefeller Foundation founded the Bureau of Social Hygiene in the 1910s.

The Rhetoric of Eugenics, as Marouf Hasian, Jr. titles his book, colored the body politic of the New Man. First and foremost, the New Man possessed a perfect body.[8] During the 1920s and 1930s, popular magazines, scientific journals, films, and science fiction relentlessly promulgated an idealized image of the healthy man. A masculine physique signified success; physical strength became synonymous with strength of character. Magazines such as *Fortune*, *Life*, and *Popular Mechanics* were filled with semi-nude men reshaping the "degenerate" civilization by hammering it against the anvil of idealized male strength.

The story of the renowned bodybuilder Charles Atlas reached its height of popularity during the interwar years.[9] Having been beaten up by a husky lifeguard on Coney Island, New York and unable to fight back because of his frail body frame, Atlas transformed himself into "the world's most perfectly developed man" through a muscle-making technique that he himself had developed. His advertisements in boys' magazines, comic books, and popular science magazines demanded, "Are You a Redblooded Man?" and set the tone of an era in which this "manly" pursuit became an obsession (Fig. 3). Atlas built his first gymnasium in 1927, and during the Depression, his man-making business thrived. By 1942, he was running the most successful mail-order business of bodybuilding guides in American history. Atlas, the "muscle maestro," prided himself on supposedly adding "no less than six million pounds of solid rippling flesh to the American body."[10] Although not exactly illustrative of the eugenic movement, the Atlas story does open a lens onto a pervasive masculine desire to become a New Man.


The Insult That Turned a "CHUMP" Into a CHAMP
I Can Make YOU A New Man, Too In Only 15 Minutes a Day!
FREE BOOK
LATER

3


52 BIG PAGES
DC
SUPERMAN
WHAT CAN SUPERMAN DO WHEN CLARK KENT BECOMES A FAILURE?
READ ABOUT THE STRANGEST SPACE VOYAGE OF ALL TIME — The FLIGHT of the FAILURES!
WHO CARES IF WE'RE LOST? NO ONE WILL MISS US WE'RE A SHIPFUL OF FAILURES!

4.

4

The America of the 1930s expressed its longing for the New Man in one of its most famous comic strip superheroes, Superman (1938), whose body was so evolved that it could ascend to the sky.[11] Superman's form-fitting blue outfit is not only an outfit; it is his second skin—a sign of his metamorphosis from Clark Kent to Superman/New Man—that accentuates the contours of his super-masculine physique (Fig. 4). Superman's body becomes the trope of the sheer power with which he can conquer the gravitational pull. In the 1910s and 1920s, popular aviation magazines, such as *Flying* and *Aviator*, frequently used the term "superman" to describe an aviator, well before DC Comics co-opted the term as the name for their own version of a "superman."[12] H. G. Wells's science fiction novels, such as *Men Like Gods* (1923) and *The Shape of Things to Come* (1933) as well as other popular science fiction magazines like *Amazing Stories* and *Air Wonder Stories*, frequently cast the aviator in the mold of Superman.

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[8] Ibid.

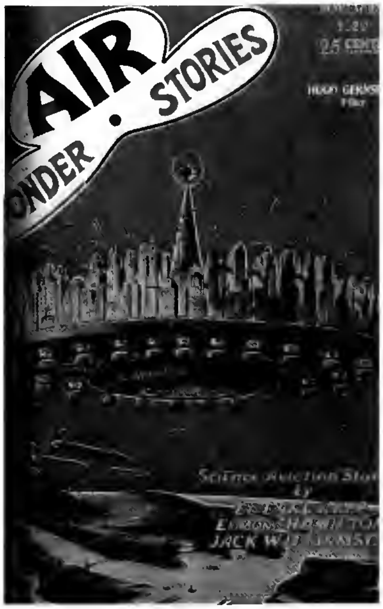
[9] Kimmel, 210-11

[10] Ibid., 211

[11] For a discussion of the Superman theme, see James S. Hans, *The Origins of the Gods* (New York. New York State University Press, 1991); Umberto Eco, "The Myth of the Superman," *Diacritics* (Spring 1972); William H Young, "Images of Order: American Comic Strips During the Depression, 1929-1938," diss., Emory University, 1969; and Sam Moskowitz, *Seekers of Tomorrow, Masters of Modern Science Fiction* (New York. World Publishing Company, 1961).

I argue that the aviator and Superman merged to create the idealized New Man. The aviator in the Vultee advertisement epitomized this fusion. The aviator and Superman were the New Men of the New Age. Yet, they took refuge in the most primordial, Adam-like representation of the body, rejecting all ornamentations that would corrupt the body's imagined purity. The nostalgic desire for a return to an "original" condition, so to speak, was also a desire for lightness that would release the body from all sorts of earthly burdens. This body practiced a ritual of abstention, sacrifice, and self-denial by shedding all weight. The New Man emerged under the sign of lightness, a lightness based not only on his desire for liberation from history, but also on his status as a hero who can be defined only within his own referential systems. For instance, how does one explain Superman, who is physically and mentally so evolved that he can fly by sheer will power? The problem lies in the need to define an extreme future condition with the epistemological framework available at a given time. To be light like Superman is to cross the boundaries of knowledge and thereby to catch a glimpse of an unimaginable future. Understanding the New Man's (or Superman's) hyper-evolutionary logic entails a cognitive liberation from the strictures of the present.

The representation of the New Man as a pure body liberated from all temporal corruptions and yet manifesting the most advanced evolutionary state was intertwined with the early twentieth-century culture of envisioning utopias. If a sense of renewal and liberatory desire gave potency to the concept of the New Man, then that sense also provoked speculations on the type of space that the New Man would inhabit. Visionary architectural thought in the 1920s and 1930s was fueled by a philosophical concern for bringing architectonic forms into conformity with the evolutionary ideologies that framed the New Man. Avant-garde architects sought to achieve that goal through an economy of structure and spatial expression—most cogently embodied in Mies van der Rohe's pronouncement, "less is more"—and through a reconsideration of the gravitational stability that orients architectural spaces. The assumption that architecture evolves parallel to human racial development and that it must therefore embody its most advanced form provided an operating framework for such thoughts. The writings of American architectural and cultural critics like Sheldon Cheney, Aldous Huxley, and Charles Beard frequently employed such expressions as the "New Age," "New World," and "New Civilization," which reflected a common evolutionary aesthetic that colored both the "New World" utopia and its New Man inhabitants.[13]



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[12] See, for instance, the advertisement by Wright Flying Field, Inc. in *Flying* (August, 1916): 273.

[13] Sheldon Cheney, *The New World Architecture* (New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930); Charles Beard, ed *Toward Civilization* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930); *A Century of Progress* (New York: AMS Press, 1933); and Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1932).

The most vivid expression of the "New World" was found in science fiction magazines that saturated America around the same time that Lindbergh crossed the Atlantic. Hugo Gernsback, the influential publisher of science fiction magazines, and Frank Paul, the well-known illustrator, together created some of the most enduring images of fantastic cities that represented the visionary culture of the interwar era.[14] The New Man's repositioning within a cosmic void, just like the case of Weinbaum's New Adam, was aptly reflected in Paul's fantastic *City in the Air* on the front cover of *Air Wonder Stories* (1929; Fig. 5). While scientific fantasy remained its guiding force, *City in the Air* also proffered a new notion of the architectural "body" that no longer needed an *earth* to grow from. Much interwar utopianism revolved around these types of "floating" cities and "hovering" architectural masses.[15] If the earth was the foundation of the architectonic knowledge—symbolized by the post-and-lintel spatial coordination of Laugier's primitive hut—then for *City in the Air* that earth was now both literally and archeologically a fading memory.

The New Man could now simply inhabit its own weightless body, which, in turn, could begin a new evolutionary journey. The weightless body of architecture signified both an original and originary condition that would give birth to new bodies of architecture. This was a dream of the *Übermensch*, the progenitor of the New Man. As Nietzsche declared, "He who will one day teach men to fly will have moved all boundary-stones; all boundary-stones will themselves fly into the air to him, he will baptize the earth anew—as the 'weightless.'"[16] Mirroring the *Übermensch's* ascending body, architecture also rose from the earth, a symbolic gesture that signified, in Nietzschean terms, shedding the burden of Western metaphysics. It is with this metaphor of liberation that the *Übermensch* envisioned a new kind of architecture that was a narcissistic reconstruction of his own body.

One wonders what kind of body the *Übermensch* possessed. Nietzsche himself warned against using simplistic Darwinism to interpret the *Übermensch* as merely the most evolved "higher man."[17] Nonetheless, we can still imagine the body of the *Übermensch* by examining Zarathustra, Nietzsche's rebel prophet. Zarathustra was, after all, always climbing up and down the mountain, alternating between his exilic cave on top and the marketplace below. He must abstain from all superficial adornments of the body to efficiently sustain his arduous vertical journey. Any burden whatsoever on his body would only impede his prophetic mission. Zarathustra's spartan body metaphorizes his liberatory desire to become just himself or, as Nietzsche might say, to come to terms with his own limitations. For all his ascensional desires, the *Übermensch* also must perform a ritual of abstention and of relinquishing all earthly associations, metaphors, and signs. Are we, then, perhaps looking at Weinbaum's New Adam? Are we possibly rehearsing the heightened drama of the New Man's body?

Illustration credits:

Frontispiece: Artist John Falter, Advertisement for Vultee Aircraft, Inc., *Fortune* 24.4, October, 1942.

Figure 2: Cover illustration, Stanley G Weinbaum, *The New Adam*, 1939.

Figure 3: Charles Atlas advertisement in *Popular Mechanics*, 1946.

Figure 4: *Superman*, DC National Comics.

Figure 5: Cover illustration, *Air Wonder Stories*, ed. Hugo Gernsback, November 1929.

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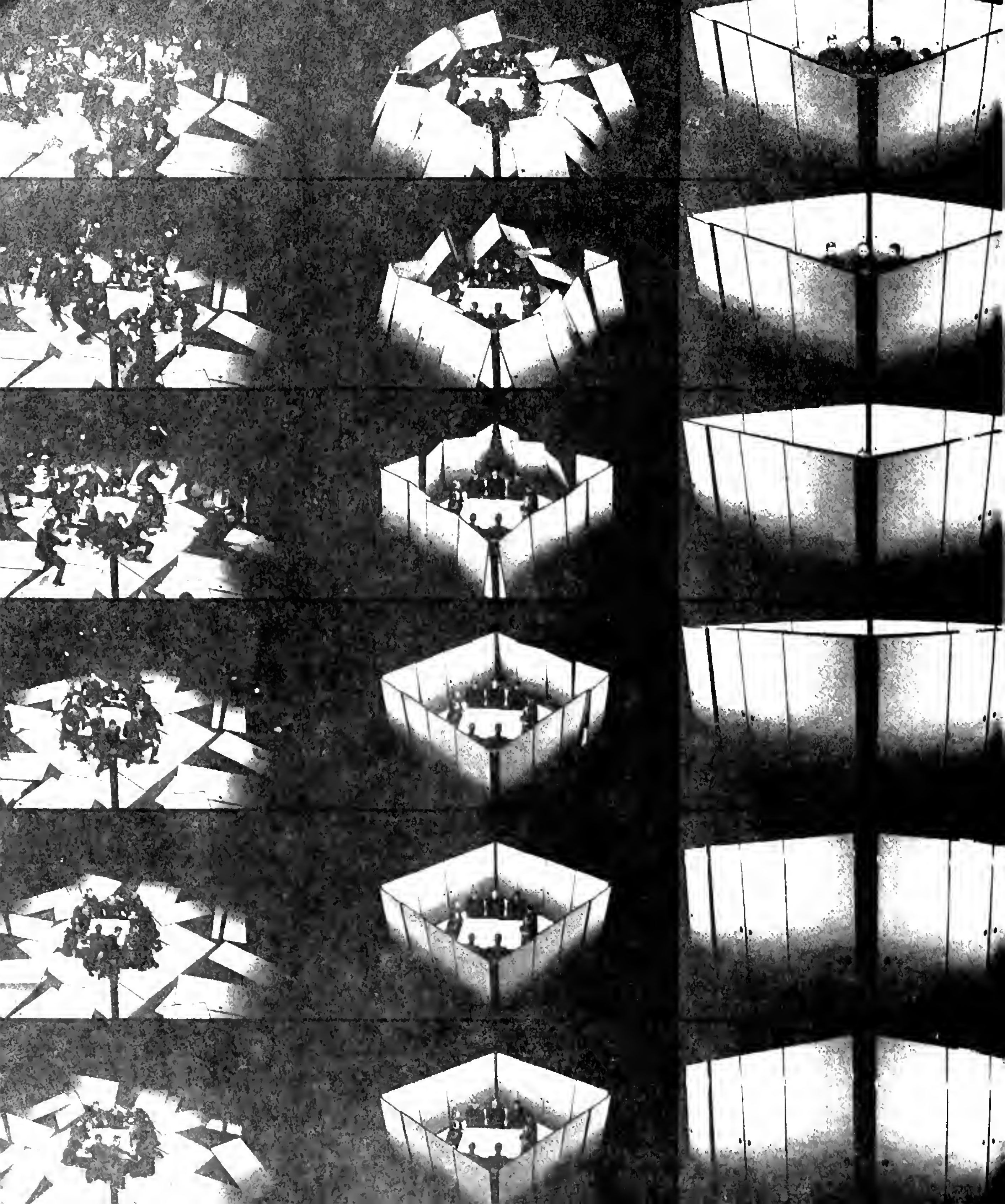
[14] Sam Moskowitz, *Explorers of the Infinite. Shapers of Science Fiction* (Cleveland and New York: World Publishing Company, 1957): 225-242.

[15] See Joseph Corn and Brian Horrigan, *Yesterday's Tomorrow, Past Visions of the American Future* (New York: The Smithsonian Institution, 1984); Ulrich Conrads and Hans G. Sperlich, *The Architecture of Fantasy* (New York: Praeger, 1962); Harvey W. Corbett, "The Future City," *Art News* 23 (April 18, 1925): 7, Tim Onosko, *Wasn't the Future Wonderful* (New York: Dutton, 1979); and Christian W Thomsen, *Visionary Architecture, From Babylon to Virtual Reality* (Munich and New York: Prestel, 1994).

[16] Friedrich Nietzsche, *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Middlesex, England. Penguin, 1961): 210.

[17] See the chapter, "Superman," (originally from *Ecce Homo*) *A Nietzsche Reader*, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (Middlesex: Penguin Books, 1977): 248. Also see Alan Schrift, "Putting Nietzsche to Work: The Case of Gilles Deleuze," *Nietzsche: A Critical Reader*, ed. Peter R. Sedgwick (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell Publishers, 1995): 262.



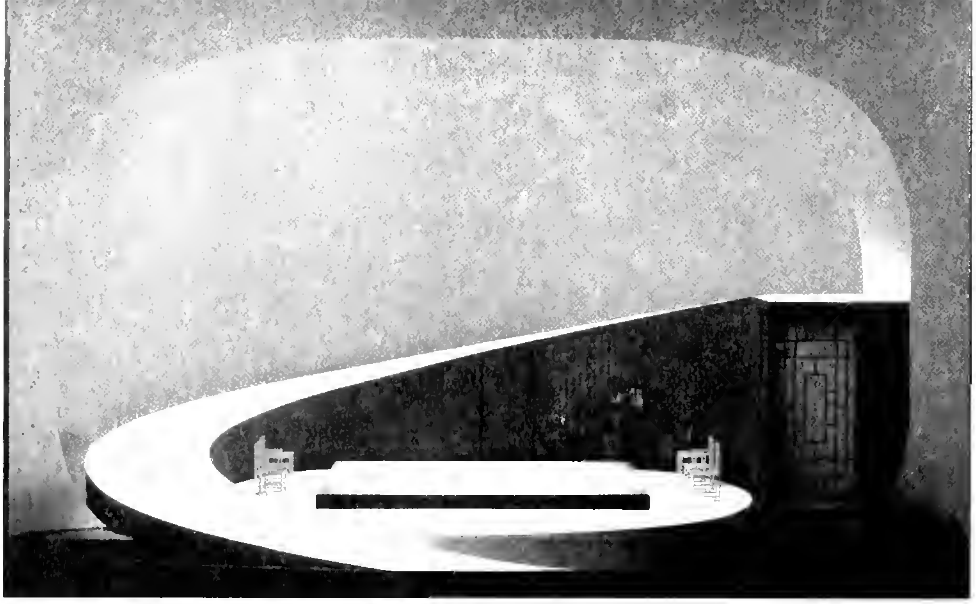
Eiko on Stage

The use of exaggeration as a vehicle to create uncanny estrangements of scale or reference has been employed by avant-garde artists ranging from the surrealists in the early twentieth century to contemporary artists such as Robert Wilson. Eiko Ishioka, a set and costume designer based in New York, expands upon this tradition by stretching boundaries that are simultaneously cultural, disciplinary, and historical. Costumes such as those created for *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, for instance, purposefully borrow from a range of divergent sources that evoke the end of the nineteenth century not through historical specificity but rather through excessiveness. A suit of armor is rendered in externalized musculature, a motif that appears again in the costumes for the Rhinegold maidens in *The Ring of the Nibelung* and the virtual reality costumes from *The Cell*. A gown based upon a Gustav Klimt painting also uses Byzantine associations as a means of referencing Dracula's early life spent in Istanbul. Such examples point to a process of borrowing that actively engages the source through a process of exaggeration as opposed to mimicry.

Eiko Ishioka's work consistently points to her interest in creating an environment for or through the costumes she designs. The carefully orchestrated photographs of isolated costumes in the monograph *Eiko on Stage* attest to this: neutral backdrops are eschewed in favor of highly evocative settings, which create contexts specific to each piece. This meticulous attention to both detail and context is extended at the scale of theater and film productions where the sets are created as much by the costumes as for them. It is in this way that her work cannot be confined to either set design or costume design—the boundaries between the two dissolve, and she allows one to inflect the other.

In much the same way that Eiko Ishioka's work escapes easy categorization, her engagement with the issue of cultural specificity and/or transcendence is quite complex. The references she makes to Japanese design are neither nationalistic in purpose, nor do they result in simple East-meets-West hybrids: they are employed in such a way that there is always a surplus of signification where multiple overlapping readings are made possible. The set design for *Chushingura*, for example, makes use of a raked stage composed of a minimalist grid that relies upon light from within and above to create the spatial divisions that would normatively be accomplished through traditional elements such as screens and tatami mats.

This refusal to employ references that would be expected to be a part of a production of this epic legend point not to a disavowal or flight from heritage on Ishioka's part but rather to a challenging engagement with that heritage. The concept of *wabi-sabi*, "presenced absence," is effectively evoked through the set's austerity and emptiness. Here an excess, created not by abundance but by restraint, is used to set the scene.



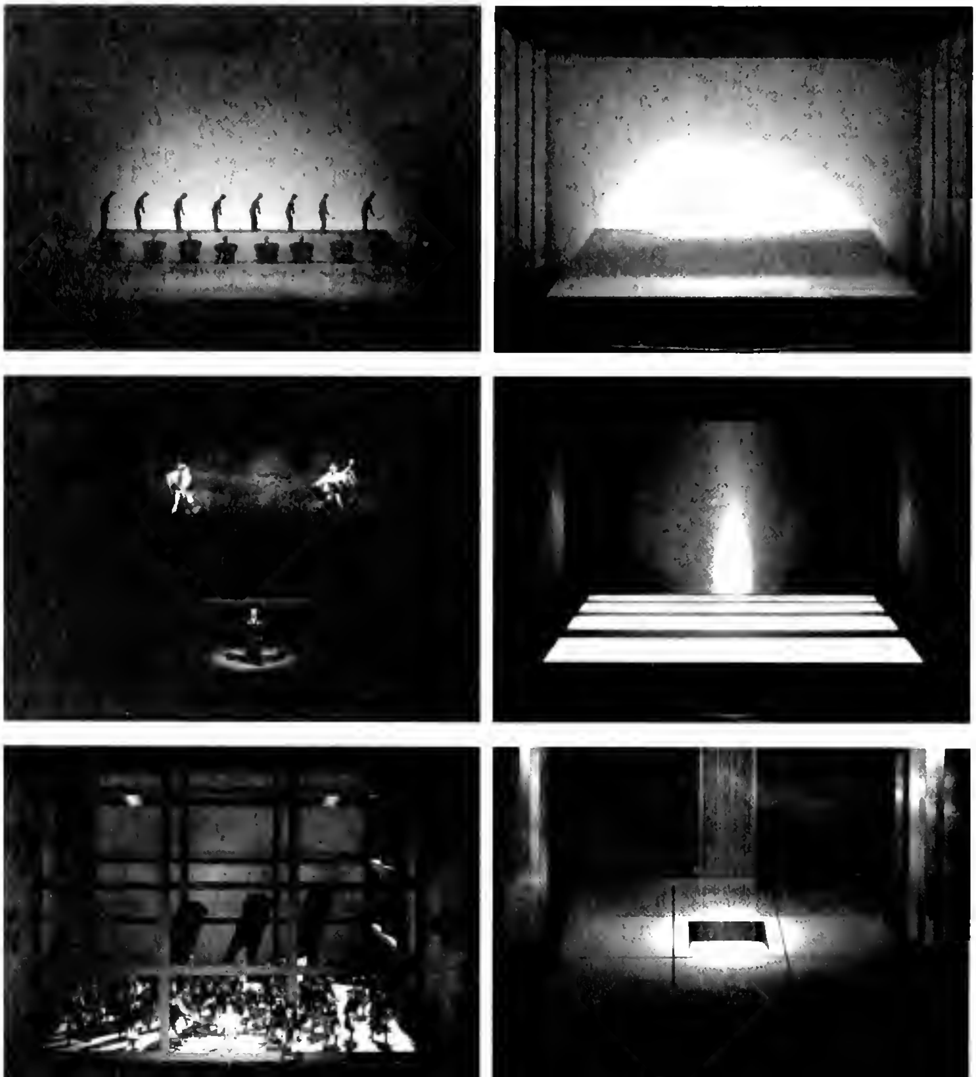


Illustration Credits

Page 38 Series of stills from the film *Mishima A Life in Four Chapters*, 1985

Page 40 (Top) Stage set from *M Butterfly* performed by the Eugene O'Neill Theater in 1997

(Bottom) The stage from *Chushingura* in some of its guises Performed by Tokyo Bunka Kaikan, 1997

Page 41 Images from *Twilight of the Gods*, one of the four operas in Wagner's *The Ring of the Nibelung* performed by De Nederlandse Opera in 1998-99

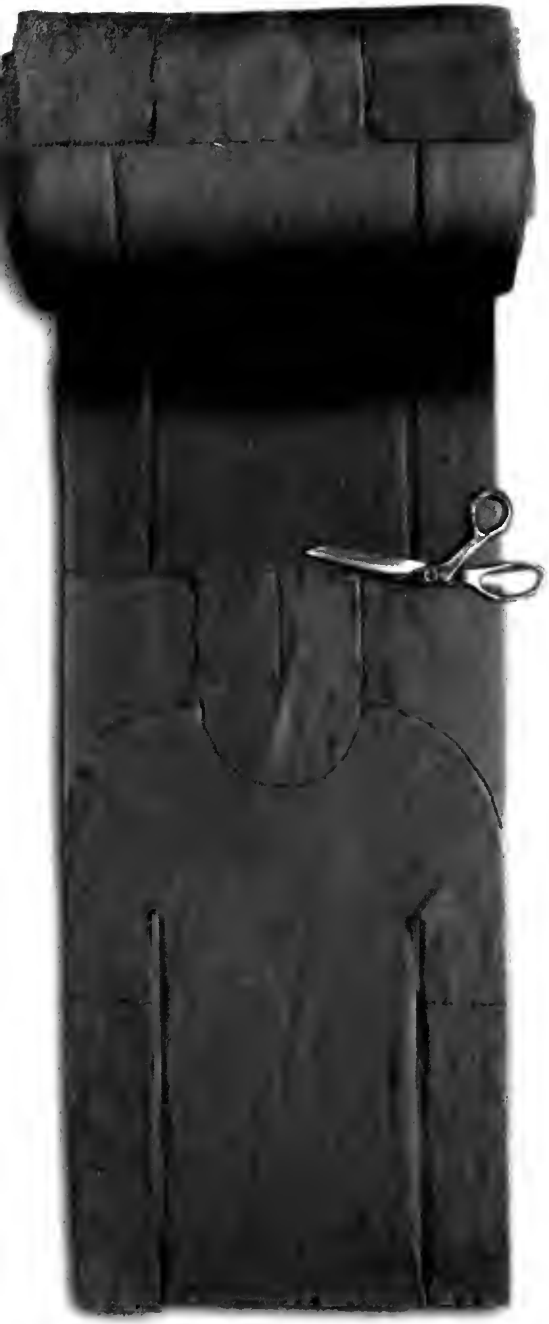
Page 42 (Top Left) Dr Keane's slavery dress from the film *The Cell*

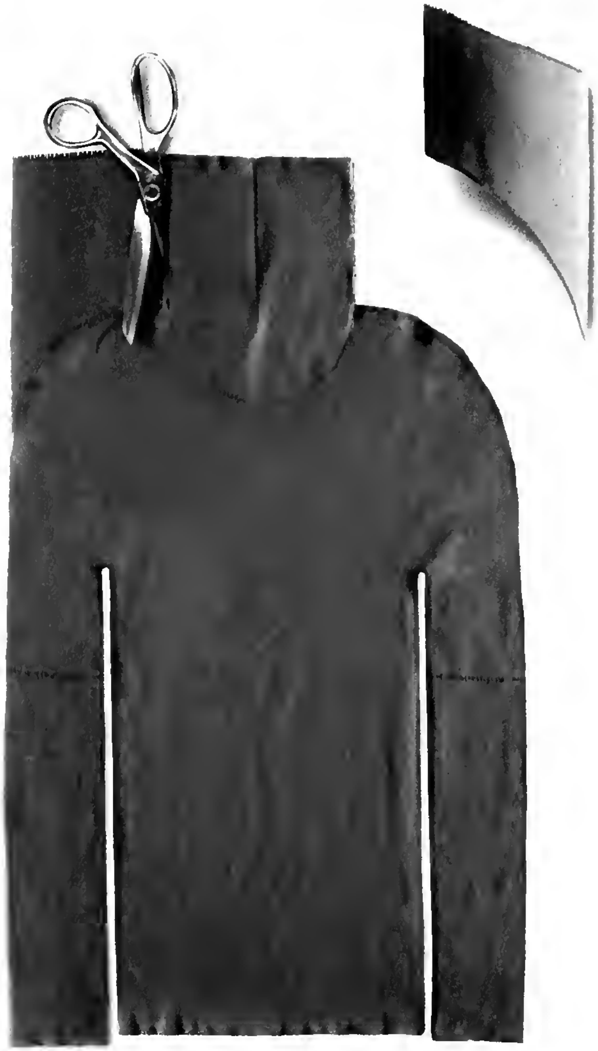
(Bottom Left) Hagen's trial costume from the *Twilight of the Gods*

(Top right) Dr Keane's facemask and neckbrace from *The Cell*

(Bottom right) Hagen's spear from *The Twilight of the Gods*

Page 43 Images from *The Cell*



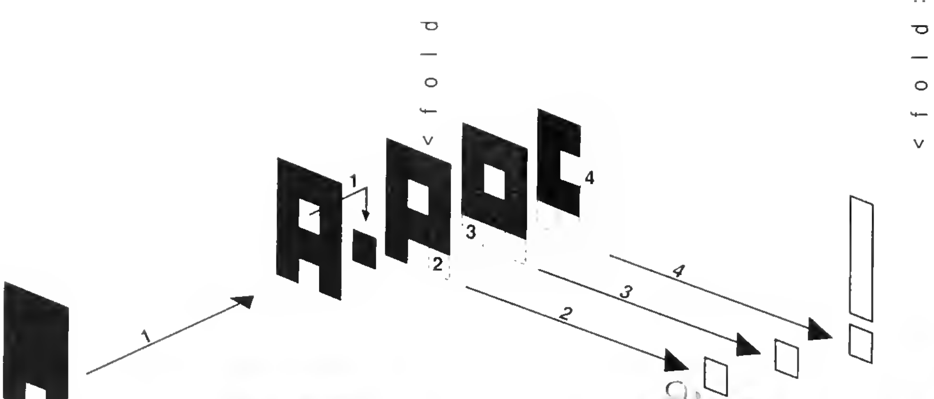


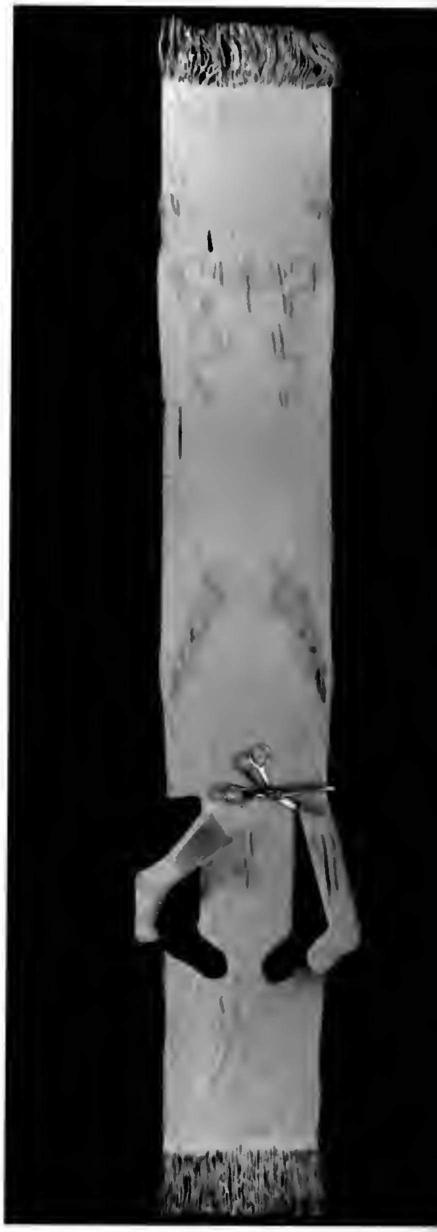
Just like the French bread baguette, cut it wherever you like. A marvelous stretch-knit series Four items, born from one shirt, depending upon where the lines are cut. No matter where you cut, it will not unravel. Shorten a sleeve, or cut a slit on the side, it is totally up to you You can be a designer. All you need is a pair of scissors

A-POC: A Piece of Cloth

Issey Miyake

In the A-POC series of clothing, Issey Miyake, the internationally renowned designer, continues to develop two themes that have long been present in his work: the manifestation of the process of making and of the original flatness of the material with which he is working The direct cutting-out which occurs liberates an item of clothing from a computer-knitted tube almost like Athena springing full-grown from the head of Zeus. This process levels out of the role of the designer relative to the consumer to some degree—the consumer becomes more actively engaged in the final realization of each piece as it is tailored for, or by, them once they have selected the fabric. In an almost perverse manner, the rolls of fabric are arranged in bolts within the store—as if the customer is entering a fabric store as opposed to a boutique.





In this way, Miyake is highlighting, in as deliberate a manner as possible, the primacy of the act of making. The proliferation of scissors appearing in the brochures advertising this line of clothing attests to this emphasis. The traces of making, what would typically be stitches or frayed edges of fabric, are here integrated into the piece.

Flatness has been implicit within clothes created by Issey Miyake prior to the A-POC series, but it is here that his oft-stated ambition of creating clothes from a single piece of cloth has been brought to its most direct realization. Many of the pleated and origami-like clothes that he designed earlier demonstrate that they began as flat pieces of cloth, in much the same way that a toga or a kimono reveal their flattened-out origin. Ironically, although in their making and display the A-POC series successfully demonstrates this emphasis on flatness, the clothes themselves fit the body and no longer convey the original flatness. This aspect of the series again attests to the privileging of process over product. The primary focus is the investigation into new processes of making rather than a search for new forms.

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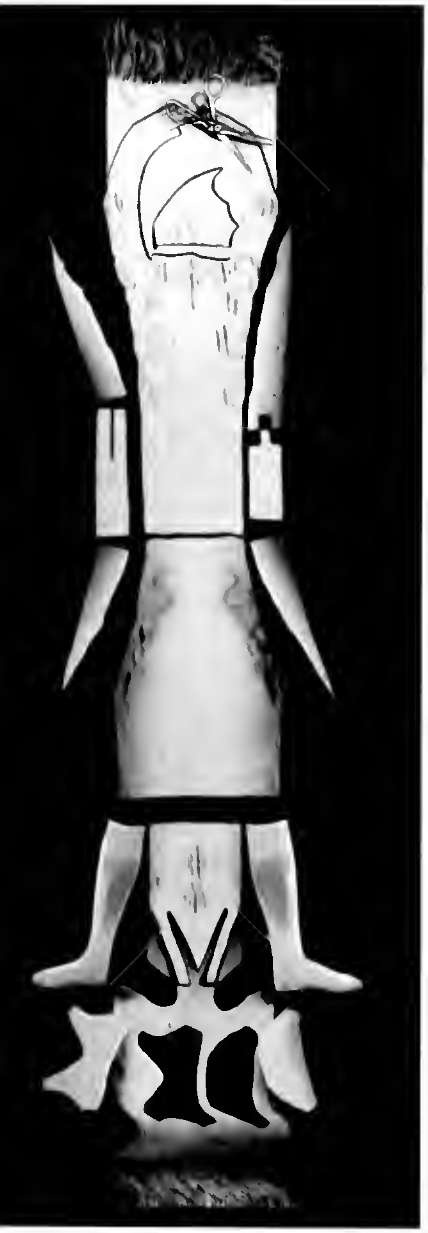

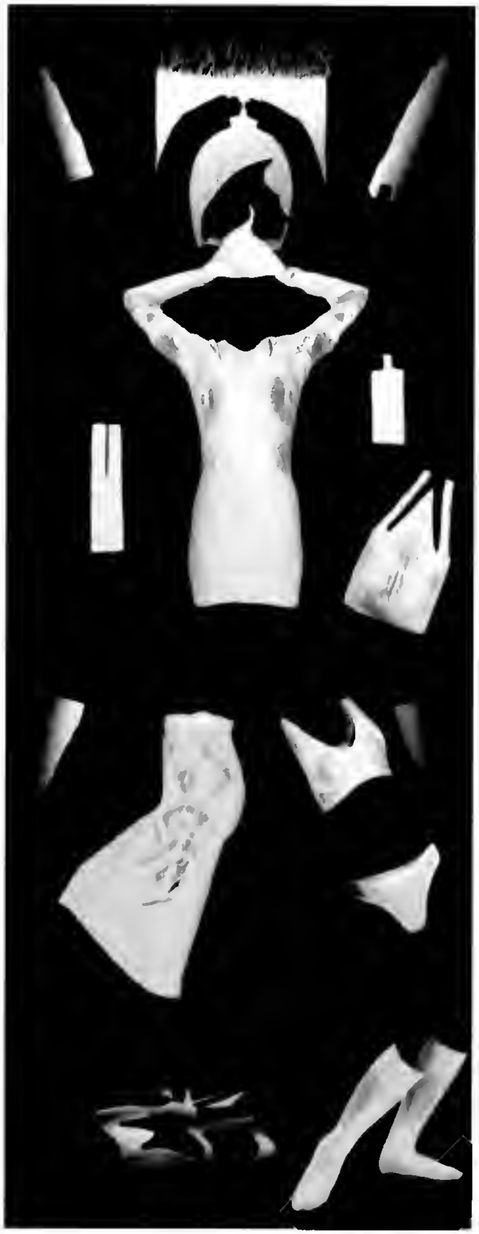

One piece of cloth. One size. Not unlike a plain canvas upon which your imagination can run free. Raschel-knit tubes are produced by an industrial knitting machine, programmed by a computer. Like a magic carpet, when the roll is unfurled, an entire wardrobe is revealed. Dresses, shirts, skirts, socks, underwear, and even bags all lie trapped within lines of demarcation. All that stands between the wearer and their clothing is a pair of scissors by which to free them. The lines create a pattern of surface design, which, in turn, becomes structural seams. The wearer need only select and free her choice.

© Issey Miyake Inc.

Office dA's House Dressing

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The polemics of the surface have kept two generations of critics busy, beginning with Post-Modernism's jubilant experiments in semiotics and later continuing with the infatuation with surface effects. Theories of the surface have indeed been treated extensively and may very well be the most significant contribution to recent architectural criticism. *Thresholds'* focus on fashion in this issue is the latest—and hopefully not the last—contribution to the debate.

However, judging from Zaha Hadid's comment regarding Office dA's PA award-winning Weston House (Figure 2, 3), it would seem that the proverbial pendulum of history has gone full swing, and that the surface is again suspect:

> *It's a prop, the skin is like a temporary structure. It's like a house wearing an inexpensive dress. You can take it off and on, change it in time. The architect puts too much emphasis on the skin; it is disposable.*[1]

The accusations are familiar; they have effectively served the modernist denigration of ornament with customary references to fashion, the accessory, and the feminine. *Déjà vu?* Are we dealing here with some curious cultural amnesia or perhaps a full-fledged modernist backlash?

Populist investments in surface may simply have been too vulgar and the post-structuralist kind too arcane to merit serious and lasting attention. But what about Herzog and de Meuron? They have built an entire career on ingenious and skillful surface treatments; they seldom fail to seduce traditionalists and avant-gardists alike, and they have yet to exhaust their creative potential in reinventing the elevation. And whatever happened to the feminist/post-structuralist critique of the ornament? Already forgotten, or never heard in the first place? Mark Wigley has already demonstrated how white paint, the most immaterial of building revetments, was indispensable to the project of modern architecture.[2] He may have argued how whiteness, while representing the erasure of ornament, still functioned as a necessary ornamental substitute, but none of this will keep the Zaha Hadids of the world from dismissing a whole building envelope as a "disposable" accessory.

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[1] Zaha Hadid, "PA Awards," *Architecture* 87.4 (April 1998): 67.

Hadid's disdain for accessory cladding is all the more intriguing when provoked by a renovation project such as Office dA's Weston House: a project which, by definition, consists in supplementing an existing structure with new features. Short of total demolition and reconstruction, any renovation project has to deal—more or less self-consciously—with its accessory nature, with the fact that it is an add-on to an autonomous building.

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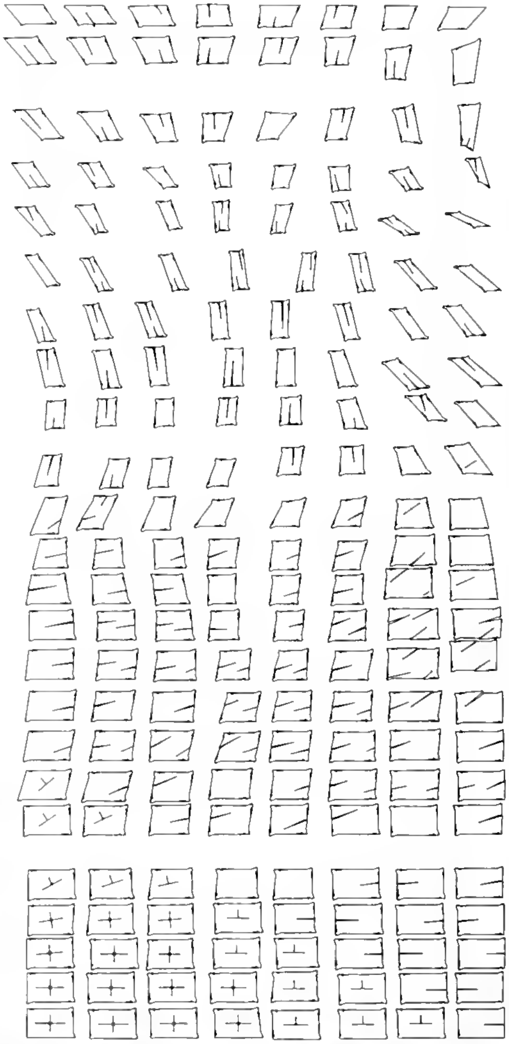
[2] Mark Wigley, *White Walls, Designer Dresses: the Fashioning of Modern Architecture* (Cambridge, MA. MIT Press, 1995).



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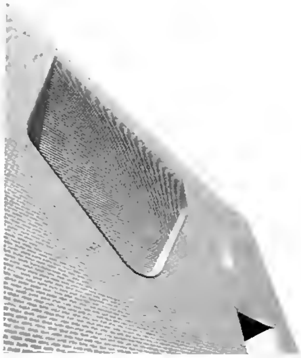
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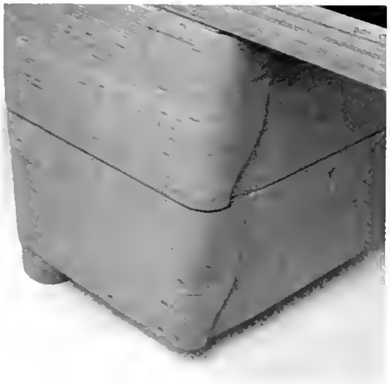
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In the Weston House, no external traces are left of the old structure and no discernable seams lay bare the devices of the architectural "makeover." The original structure may still be supporting the roof, but it is totally masked—and subsumed—by the new features.

And this is precisely why the design is an offense to modernist orthodoxy: because it allows the supplement to overwhelm the structure and make reality a function of appearance. Far from being disposable, the new cladding represents the very essence of this house. Office dA may have designed only a "dress," to use Hadid's term, but this dress substantiates the clothed body; there is no body, no architecture independent of the dress.

To invest so much in the superficial accessory, to give it a structural role in defining architectural character and identity, and therefore suggest that architecture is, in a major way, a function of cladding is typical of Office dA's work but also characteristic of a wide range of contemporary practices. The distinguishing factor in Office dA's work is the investigation of the surface as a primary field of construction: building as a function of cladding. A clear example of this is the Casa La Roca whose brick facade becomes curtain-like as the running bond pattern is stretched to create a screen (Figure 2). In this capacity, Office dA is more in tune with Gottfried Semper's theories than Venturi's. The surface is not applied to a pre-existing solid wall as a symbolic or linguistic veneer. It is understood and designed as a constitutive spatial element as much as a vehicle to architectural and cultural signification. For Office dA, both space and language are an effect of surface constructions.

Office dA's investment in surface is perhaps most evident in the collaborative installations for the "Immaterial/Ultramaterial" show at the Harvard Design School Gallery.[3] Here the tactics of surface elaboration are further attuned to the exigencies and potentials of emergent technologies and economies. The inspiration is unabashedly sartorial: thin-ply wood, rubber, and steel mesh are deployed in the gallery using compositional and manufacturing techniques that are transposed as literally as possible from apparel design.

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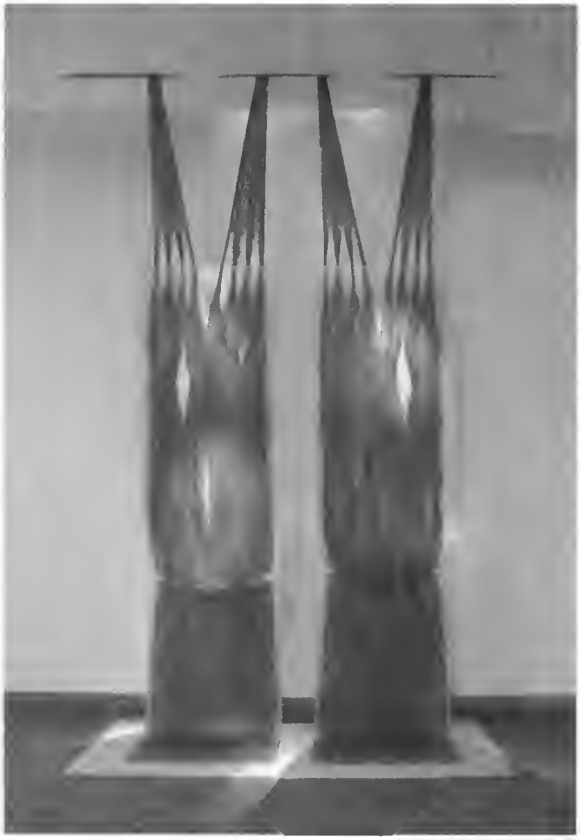
[3] Nader Tehrani acted as advisor to two project teams within the Immaterial/Ultramaterial exhibition. Team Thin-Ply was comprised of Kristen Giannattasio and Heather Walls who, along with Hyuek Rhee and Mario D'Artista, also fabricated the piece. Team Rubber was designed and fabricated by the project team of Richard Lee and John May. Kyungen Kim assisted in the research for Team Rubber.

The Team Thin-Ply installation was designed in collaboration between Kristen Giannattasion, Heather Walls, and Nader Tehrani (Frontispiece, Figures 4-6). The installation is a complex and ostensibly malleable surface performing as column revetment, vault, and canopy. It is made of digitally customized wood components assembled with consistent joinery—a synthesis akin to techniques of standardized tailoring that the fashion industry perfected decades ago. Despite its wooden material and quasi-rigid structure, the architecture has a fabric-like quality. It is due to flexible, yet stable seams that it will accommodate a variety of uses and situations: this wooden architecture can be erected, hung, draped, or suspended in infinitely varied configurations and with only minor adjustments to suit different spaces and objects. It is a vestment in a most literal sense.



This installation radicalizes the latent proposition of the Weston House: the *entire* structure is a dress. The dress is self-supporting; it is independent of the scaffolding body. The body, rather than the dress, may here be "disposable," the core collapsed into the supplement.

If the Thin-Ply installation recalls Paco Rabane's staple metal dresses of the seventies, then its counterpart, the Team Rubber installation (Figure 10) developed with Richard Lee and John May, is similar to lingerie. Besides the blatantly erotic connotations of curvaceous rubber casts and rebars in the shape of bra-straps, the piece is lingerie-like in its suggestive see-through quality, embedding, yet revealing, reinforcing rebars that are customarily hidden from view. The lingerie-like effect is also due to the distillation of the architecture/vestment to an essential interplay of shaping and buttressing surfaces, which lays bare the device of clothing.

Both installations explore and translate spatial, structural, and constructional techniques that have been developed and refined in apparel design, a field that is by definition predicated on the artful fabrication of surface. They make an ingenious use of old and proven sartorial tricks, which for centuries have made structural and sculptural wonders out of simple fabric as much as out of cutting-edge materials and manufacturing processes.

The garment industry, in which customization and nim-

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ble responsiveness to rapidly shifting trends are constitutive imperatives, has long exploited the potentials of CAD-CAM. These have only recently perturbed the relatively conservative modes of production in architecture. Indeed, most buildings today are hopelessly retrograde when compared to vulgar industrial products. Hadid's Vitra Fire Station may look revolutionary in its sci-fi garb, yet it is firmly rooted in nineteenth-century building technology.

There seems to be a wealth of architectural possibilities available within a simple dress, and a great deal to be learned from apparel design—as much as from other industrial processes that have taken the lead in exploiting new global economies and digital resources.[4] Evidence of this can be found in most of Office dA's projects: "Fabricating Coincidences," (Figures 12-14) the origami-like installation in MoMA's "Fabrications" show, the "Laszlo" furniture line (Figures 8, 11), the Otto table (Figure 9), and the Witte Building in Green Bay Wisconsin (Figure 7), to name a few obvious examples.[5] Research in this field will surely prove to be more productive and lasting than the current indulgence in fetishism: expressionist simulation of capitalist flows, swarms, biological process, and you-name-what-complex-phenomenon in benign effigies.[6]

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[4] The case has been repeatedly made in Frank Gehry's effective use of aircraft design technology

[5] The Laszlo filing cabinets were designed in collaboration with R Shane Williamson who pursues an important research project in CAD/CAM applications for architecture at the University of Toronto.

[6] For a fuller critique of such tendencies see Preston Scott Cohen and Robert Levit, "Bona Fide Modernity," *Assemblage 41* (April 2001): 18.

Illustration Credits

all projects designed by Monica Ponce de Leon and Nader Tehrani unless otherwise noted.
all photos by Dan Bibb unless otherwise noted.
Frontispiece: Team Thin-Ply installation, Kristen Giannattasio, Heather Walls, and Nader Tehrani.
Figure 2: Casa La Roca. Photo Richard Lee and Nader Tehrani.
Figure 3: Weston House. Photo Richard Lee and Nader Tehrani.
Figures 4-6: Team Thin-Ply installation. Photo Nader Tehrani.
Figure 7: Witte Building.
Figure 8: Laszlo desk.
Figure 9: Otto table.
Figure 10: Team Rubber installation, Richard Lee, John May, and Nader Tehrani. Photo Nader Tehrani.
Figure 11: Laszlo file cabinets. Office dA in collaboration with R. Shane Williamson. Photo Nader Tehrani.
Figures 12-14: "Fabricating Coincidences." Figure 13 photo Michael Moran.

Joseph August Lux: Fighting Fashion with the Kodak

Joseph August Lux (1872-1947) was an author of plays, novels, and children's rhymes. He founded and directed an art school in Hellerau (1907-08) and was seen as a vigorous reformer of popular theater. He was also known as a defender of Austrian literary history, and of its Catholic Romantic heritage in particular. A prize for literature is still named after him in Salzburg, where he served as a director of the Society of Writers and Journalists in the 1920s. Prior to World War I, however, Lux was also one of the leading publicists of the new architecture that was in the process of being formulated since the turn of the twentieth century. Moving effortlessly between Austrian and German contexts, he championed not only the Viennese Secessionists, but also the work of Herman Muthesius, Bruno Paul, and Peter Behrens. The period between 1905 and 1910 was one of extraordinary productivity for Lux. His articles were published in the important newspapers and magazines of the day such as *Nord und Süd*, *Morgen*, *Kunstgewerbeblatt*, *Grenzboten*, and *Deutscher Camera-Almanach*. He was a signator at the founding of the Werkbund, his book *Das neue Kunstgewerbe in Deutschland* (The New Arts and Crafts in Germany, 1908) serving the Werkbund's interest much better than its own publications.[1] He even organized a journal of his own, *Hohe Warte*. Richly illustrated and elegantly laid out, it was first published in 1905 and championed the work of the leading German-speaking architects and designers of the day, as well as the writings of Walt Whitman, Oscar Wilde, and John Ruskin. Despite all this, Lux, who studied philology in London and Paris, is known only to a few scholars of the Werkbund, and even then, usually only by way of occasional citations from his writings.

In the short space of this article, I can hardly do justice to Lux's complex oeuvre. I thus propose to study a small but telling piece that he wrote on amateur photography, "Artistic Secrets of the Kodak." The essay appeared in his book *Der Geschmack im Alltag* (Taste in the Everyday, 1908, 1910) and was to become the basis for a book of its own, *Die Kunst des Amateurphotographen* (Art of the Amateur Photographer, 1910).[2]

To understand the piece one must know that although amateur photographers had already begun to make their mark in the 1880s, photography was not changed fundamentally until 1895 when Kodak introduced a simple and inexpensive camera, the Pocket Kodak, made specifically for the mass market. In 1901, an improved version, the so-called Brownie Kodak, came out. Made of jute board and wood, and named after a well-known children's book character, it cost only one dollar. Within the first year of production, one hundred thousand cameras had been sold. Soon, easy-to-use cameras could be bought from various manufacturers, many of them German; some were, in fact, specifically designed for

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[1] Joseph August Lux, *Das neue Kunstgewerbe in Deutschland* (Leipzig: Klinkhardt & Bierman, 1908).

[2] Joseph August Lux, *Der Geschmack im Alltag: ein Buch zur Pflege des Schönen* (Dresden. Gerhard Kuhtmann, 1908). Lux published an earlier version of the piece in 1905 "Amateurphotographie und Heimatkunst," *Hohe Warte*, 2 (1905): 19, a variant "Photographische Kultur," *Deutscher Camera-Almanach* 4 (1908): 1-13; and a final version as *Die Kunst des Amateurphotographen* (Stuttgart. Strecker & Schröder, 1910).

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women. Camera clubs abounded, as did exhibitions, lecture series, competitions, and journals.[3]

The emergence of popular photography challenged existing aesthetic conventions, allowed women freer access to art, and spurned on the emergence of photojournalism in the 1920s. However, it would be wrong to see the snapshot, as one writer recently claimed, as something that "haunts art photography as its defining Other."[4] In actuality, the split between high art and the world of amateurs would take place in photography only in the 1920s when professional photographers would demand a more insistent focus on the formal techniques of the art. Until then, the difference between high and low was less clear. Nonetheless, despite the oft-repeated premise that early art photography was somewhere between the aesthetics of painting and the technology of chemistry, it would be misleading to think that amateur photography was unable to establish an aesthetic of its own.[5] In fact, before this differentiation, it was the amateur who was often seen as more capable of aesthetic reasoning than the professional who was hired to make faithful recordings for the purpose of portraiture, science, or archaeology.[6]

And it was exactly this premise that inspired Lux to write on the Kodak. As Lux's article makes clear, the camera was to serve an important mission in the fight against the arbitrariness and insubstantiality of the contemporary world. That world, he argues, is epitomized by its tendency to subject itself to the trends of fashion that hypnotize the masses into following the false and arbitrary leadership of the wealthy class. The fashion industry is a machine "that needs fodder; the great wheel has to be kept turning."[7] In contradistinction to fashion's "hypnotizing falsities," Lux points to the uniforms of nurses and students that are practical and, to some degree, even fashionable.[8] However, if Austrians wanted to expand on this, they would have to organize themselves more systematically into "a spiritual movement."[9]

Lux hoped that his own journal *Hohe Warte*, which means the "lookout tower," would provide the basis for that movement. Though clearly metaphorical, the title refers to a series of houses by Josef Hoffmann in a newly fashionable villa quarter to the north of Vienna's center that was named *Hohe Warte* after a nearby weather station.[10] But this was still a small group of individuals. Thus, Lux turns to the camera to expand the number of participants in the mission to reveal what he calls the *Schönheit des Daseins* (the Beauty of Being).[11] Photography, he argues, has to be approached culturally and philosophically as a "seeing mirror," as something that both receives *and* perceives, something that sees both the surface *and* that which lies beneath it. Lux wants his readers to use the camera not only to reconstruct the image of the house on its inside, but also to reconstruct the internal psychology corresponding to it. In reverse, Lux wants his readers to go from the realm of mental interiority to the level of the room and then finally out into the realm of the city.

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[3] An important text, of course, is Pierre Bourdieu's book *Photography, A Middle-brow Art*, trans. Shaun Whiteside (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990). It presents the case that photography is never an end in itself, but an index of social relationships.

[4] Douglas R. Nickel, "The Snapshot," *Snapshots: The Photography of Everyday Life, 1888 to the Present*, exh. cat. (San Francisco: San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, 1998): 14.

[5] Robert Castell and Dominique Schnapper, "Aesthetic Ambitions and Social Aspirations: The Camera Club as a Secondary Group," *Photography, A Middle-brow Art* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1990): 128.

[6] See, for example, A. Miethe, "Photographische Kunst," *Das Atelier des Photographen* 16.7 (July, 1909): 79-82. Miethe, much like Lux, wants to challenge professional photographers to think more like painters who aspire to render the inner characteristic of the subject. He urges photographers to avoid being either too "artistic" (as in over retouching the image) or too factual (as in focusing on ugly realism). Lux, of course, is asking for more, namely a genuinely spiritual element.

[7] Lux, *Der Geschmack im Alltag*, 54.

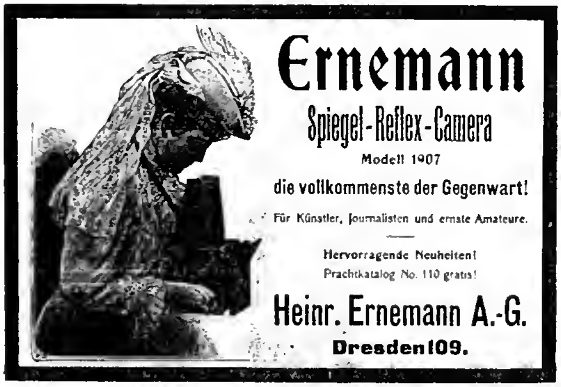
[8] Ibid., 64

[9] A spiritualist component was always an important part of Lux's position. In the early years, it was driven by a mixture of influences: Plato, Christ, Zarathustra, Theosophy, Buddhism, and the German biologist and philosopher Ernst von Häckel. In later years, it took the shape of a more traditional Catholic perspective. Lux even became the president of the Austrian Union of Catholic Writers.

[10] Of these villas, designed for Hoffmann's Secessionist friends, the best known is the Villa Spitzer (1902-03). It had a compact form with an asymmetrically placed tower-like element. The interiors were painted a simple white, but were strongly framed by walnut woodwork. Further up the hill there was indeed a lookout tower, which had been built in 1851 for scientific research.

Lux begins the piece, however, in an unusual way. Whereas most commentators of the time presented the case that amateurs should master the technical basics while keeping an eye out for things like composition, balance, light and shade, Lux argues that technique has to be first understood through its limitations. Having instructions spelled out "in black and white" does not mean that one knows how to make a black and white photograph. Photography must go beyond the technical to become an encounter with the unknown. In another clever parallelism—this time between the camera and the body—he suggests that just as the camera has a single opening through which light is focused, so too, the user of the camera needs to have a "single spiritual center" on which to focus critical reflection. For that, he points out, "there exist no instructions."

A hint of the complex argument embedded in this thought is given by the fact that his discourse on photography is situated in the middle of his four-hundred-page book. The "spiritual center" of the book turns out to be a text that serves as *ersatz* instructions to the amateur photographer. This text, written at a place where textuality is not only absent, but also impossible, becomes a threshold in an epistemological development that allows the "mind's eye" to come into focus. The mind's eye is bound, however, not by the logic of textuality, but by a logic of speech that is more open-ended and telling, one in which "not every petty detail needs to be spelled out in front of our eyes." If using the camera begins with the "black and white" of words on a page, it ends with a "softening of transitions of the black and white contrast" to collapse image and meta-narration into one thing. In other words, speech-through-images overcomes the mechanistic and perfectionist seductions of the Kodak while allowing light to literally filter its way into the photograph, obscuring the clarity of the outline to reveal an underlying metaphysical presence.



Ernemann

Spiegel-Reflex-Camera

Modell 1907

die vollkommenste der Gegenwart!

Für Künstler, Journalisten und ernste Amateure.

Hervorragende Neuheiten!

Prachtkatalog No. 110 gratis!

Heinr. Ernemann A.-G.

Dresden 109.

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This aesthetic was not meant to wash away the particular in a sentimental haze, but on the contrary, to focus upon it all the more insistently: "a section of an artfully braided fence, a carved door, a flower window, a rose bower, an architectural view of a garden segment." Though fragments, they are the syllabic structure of the everyday that can become monumental by being brought "totally into the foreground." Lux thus asks the amateur to defy the logic of the Kodak, both from the point of view of its science (in the sense that over-illuminated photographs do not serve as accurate recordings), and from the point of view of content (in the sense that one must search for a narrative of common details and not confine oneself to one's own private storytelling mode). With a subtle reference to Catholic theology, he argues, "Only in this manner will we augment the treasure chest of our icon-imagery (*Seelenbilder*), and offer ourselves relief from jaded habits."[12]

The photographs, Lux goes on to argue, are not to become static, quasi-devotional objects. They are sketches in the double sense of the word. They evoke a larger project toward which one must orient oneself.

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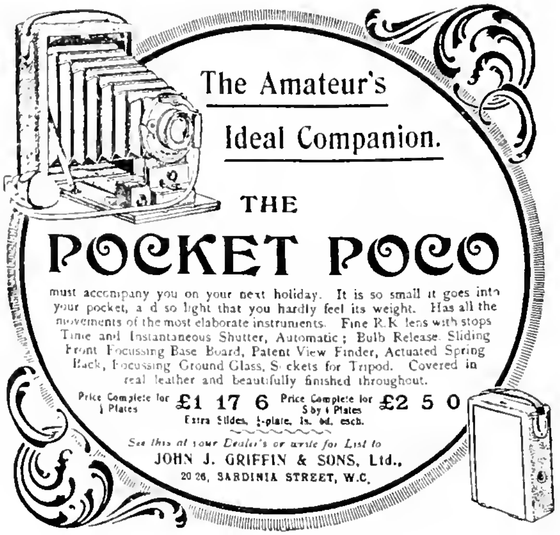
[11] Lux, *Der Geschmack im Alltag*, iii.

[12] Lux's Catholicism would become more pronounced in later years. In 1930 he defended Austria against the imminent *Anschluss* with Nazi Germany arguing that Austria was obedient only to God and to the Pope.



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In that sense, they are like the studies an artist might make. But they are also a form of self-schooling different from the type of learning that comes from "instruction." For this reason, the job of the amateur is a serious one. Sketches have to have content whether it is the intimate details of their environment or "folk art and local history." This *studied* modernity, or rather, this modernity-as-study, is different from the artificial and stilted approach of the professional photographer (*Berufsphotograph*). Only the amateur can make the "everyday" become the site where the "external picture of life" (*äussere Lebensbild*) matches the "internal spiritual state" (*innere seelische Verfassung*). As the word *Verfassung* (state, condition, or constitution) indicates, the internal is neither private nor even overtly religious. It possesses a "constitutionality" oriented to the public, and a monumentality oriented to the divine.

The absence of instructions, which in Lux's view marks this technology, becomes the very thing against which one rebuilds the aesthetic-spiritual constitutionality of culture. The death of the text is, therefore, not a bland negative. It is what enables orality and spirituality to recognize their importance. However, the path is not linear. It is marked by a dialectic oscillating between instruction and sketch, book and eye, machine and spirit, body and fragment, absence and presence, and even house and camera.

In his discussion, Lux mentions eighteenth-century portraiture, art from the time of Dürer, and the Belgian painter Fernand Khnopff (1858-1921) as examples. Regarding the first two, one should recall that the Germans of the period had rediscovered the eighteenth century with a vengeance: Schinkel in architecture, Dürer in art, Goethe in literature, and Schiller in philosophy. Though not unknown in the nineteenth century, the first decade of the twentieth century was when they all became "classics." The centennial of Schiller's birthday in 1904 was celebrated throughout Germany as a national holiday. The birth of the Germanic notion of "modernity" is thus heavily rooted in a revival of the eighteenth century. It is an equation so deep in the German consciousness that even Jürgen Habermas could not alter the course of his thinking to reflect on its historiographic presence.

Lux speaks with admiration of Khnopff, perhaps best known today for his evocative allegorical paintings. Khnopff's reception among the Viennese Secessionists, though not adequately studied, was certainly a positive one.[13] When Khnopff came to Vienna in 1898 as a contributor to the Secessionist Exhibition of 1900, he was received with great warmth. In subsequent exhibitions, quotations from Khnopff's writings graced entablatures along with those of Ruskin and Wilde.[14] Even though Khnopff's paintings evoke an interiority and quietude that was possibly too subjective for Lux, he was astute in noting the peculiarity of Khnopff's figures, which often seem to have part of the body cut off from view by the frame, as if taken by a photograph. Indeed, unlike many artists of the time who disguised their use of the camera, Khnopff not only had his own camera equipment, but also worked very eagerly and openly with the photographic arts. He would pose a subject, make a photograph, and then touch up the photograph in preparation for a final sketch.[15] Khnopff's work thus possessed a high degree of specificity and naturalism that many theorists identified as the difference between German realism and French impressionist aesthetics.

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[13] In 1901, Gallery Keller und Reiner held a one-man show of Khnopff's work Khnopff's fellow fellow citizen, Henry van de Velde, designed the exhibition.

[14] Khnopff also became close friends with Paul Schultze-Naumburg, a German painter and cultural critic who collaborated with Lux in the editing of *Hohe Warte* and who was later to become famous in architectural circles for his defense of a highly conservative form of modernity.

[15] Lux, *Der Geschmack im Alltag*, 76.

Though not dissimilar to John Ruskin's appreciation of Turner, Lux's admiration of Khnopff departs from conventional art criticism: evoking not the work itself, but rather the societal-methodological principle on which he thinks that work rests. If we see Khnopff's work as neither painting nor photography, but as a "third" aesthetic not dependent on the techniques of either, then we can understand why it would have resonance with Lux. There is, therefore, in Lux's reference to Khnopff, something that might loosely be called a theoricity, which equates avant-gardist disciplinary displacement with the everyday in its displacement from both the past and the future. That displacement is geared never to allow autonomy to take root.

In all this, Lux deflects Khnopff into an already existing late nineteenth-century Germanic discourse about culture-in-the-everyday, exemplified in the writings of Ludwig Richter (1803-1884). In explaining his woodcut cycle *Für's Haus* (For the House), Richter had written: "For many years now, I have carried within me the desire to represent our family in its relation to church, house, and nature in a series of images, and thus to bring into the dear German home a work which reveals to everyone in the mirror of art what each person has been once only: for the young, the present and the future; for the elderly the homeland of youth; for all, the flower-garden of paradise, which has borne the seeds of a later sowing and harvest."[16]

Ultimately, one could say that Lux aspires to finding the logic of unselfconscious thought rooted in *völkisch* nationalism. But whereas many shared that ideal—indeed it became the defining ideal of modernist aesthetics—Lux was none too subtle in his emphasis on the *Seelenbild* that transforms the symbol of modernity, i.e. the Kodak, into an instrument of spiritual renewal. Lux steals the enemy's invention for his own purposes. But the aspiration for a spiritual world, as we know, is no protection against arrogance and blindness. Hoping that the force of industry would be matched by the spiritual force that he so longed for, Lux argued in 1915:

> *The war freed Germany... almost overnight from everything that was sick, rotten, ungermanic, and lowly [was removed]... to reveal a purer and more beautiful world...Germany elevated itself because of its understanding of quality, beauty, and good taste and will now be able to successfully control the world market.... The modern development has removed antiquated concepts of culture and brought to Germany its feeling for its organic totality.*[17]

Bourgeois patriotic aesthetics, as it was framed by Lux and others, was so filled with the confidence of an immanent modernity that it did not pause to reflect more seriously either on war or on the rhetoric and jargon inherent in the project of aesthetic purification. However, if the hope of providing a stabilizing text was certainly utopic—the endgame of the Enlightenment as Adorno might have framed it—then the search for meaning in the ambiguous interplay of such doubles as camera/psychology, house/camera, photograph/sketch, sketch/study, and fragment/icon is an indication not only of the multiple incompleteness of the question of modernity, but also of one of its most fundamental theoricities.

Illustration Credits

Frontispiece: *Des yeux bruns et fleur bleue*, Fernand Khnopff, 1905.
Figure 2: Kodak "Bull's-Eye" camera, roll film, 1896.
Figure 3: Advertisement for camera equipment, Germany 1909.
Figure 4: Advertisement for camera equipment, Great Britain.

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[16] Quoted in Paul Mohn, *Ludwig Richer: Gemälde, Aquarelle, Zeichnungen und Holzscnitte*, ed H. Knackfuss (Bielenfeld-Leipzig Künstler-Monographien XIV, 1896): 3-4.

[17] Lux, *Deutschland als Welterzieher* (Stuttgart Union Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft, 1915): 62, 98

Artistic Secrets of the Kodak

The amateur no doubt wants to have a relationship to art. Isn't that why he bought himself a Kodak? And he would like his instructions printed in black and white. For the art of photography depends, as we all know, on the ability of the amateur to approach the task technically as well as artistically. But there exist no explicit instructions for that. All that can be done is to properly adjust the mind's eye with good conscience.

We consider an amateur photo artistically successful if it imparts to the subject an unusual characteristic by means of interesting light and shadow effects. The gradations of light and shade—the subtlety of their nuances—are the means by which we can suggest the absent coloration up to a point. The purpose is to bring the characteristics of the object into focus. It is not the commonplace that interests us but the characteristic elements of the photographed object. It is not a generic "dog" that is of interest to us but a specific dog with its particular beauty or ugliness. We do not want to show nature in its customary format; we want to catch it off guard, find that which is novel and original to us, and which offers an unexpected aspect of the otherwise blatant commonplaces of persons or objects. Only this will augment the treasure chest of our icon imagery and offer us relief from jaded habits.

Our Kodak is the means by which we can penetrate into this unknown land of surprises, those wonderful and rare flashes of insight, of amazing visions that mysteriously deepen our life. And indeed our Kodak accidentally succeeds in revealing many a fortunate insight so that, on occasion, we almost do not trust our eyes.

But our Kodak shall not have better eyes than we do, for that would put us in the position of a hunter who hits his game only accidentally. We cannot offer surprises if, like the average professional photographer, we force men and things together into an unnatural pose. We have to emphasize that arbitrary groupings will result in absolutely conventional genre scenes in all likelihood. Of course, artistic amateur study photos (and photographs are always only studies) also strive for a pictorial effect, which means that one chooses a main subject on which to concentrate all attention and avoids everything in its vicinity that does not enhance it or that could weaken its characteristics.

The pictorial derives from a unity of effects, and this unity is due to a single spiritual center in the picture, for two such centers would forestall unity and cancel each other out. This spiritual center can, of course, also consist of a multitude of things, of an activity or of a plurality of persons. The superimposition or subordination of objects within the full scope of their natural freedom is a skill that often leads to missteps. The properly proceeding amateur will grasp nature where he encounters it, in its intrinsicality and immediacy, without forcing it to submit to his will.

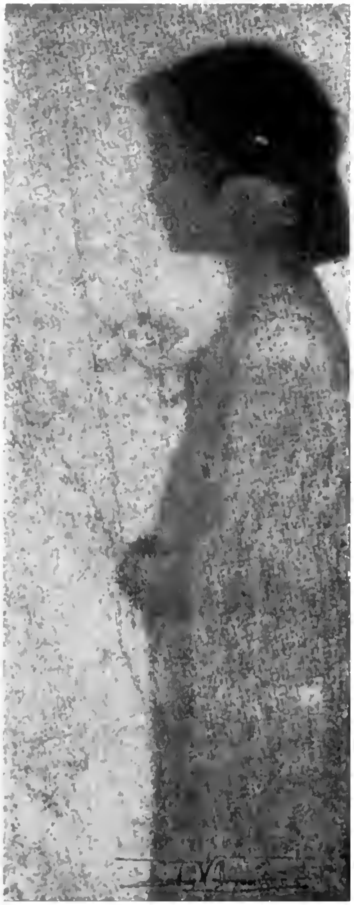
The true amateur knows how to grasp the right moment. His task is the difficult art of seeing. Beyond that, a second but no less indispensable task is the demand on him to realize his photographic vision to render what he saw by employing the technical means at his disposal. Bad photographs are like blind mirrors that fail to do the object justice. Of course, there exist no instructions.

We have seen feebly illuminated photos that were artistically perfect despite the fact that weak illumination is usually a consequence of a faulty light source and exposure. We would normally not expect that a technical defect of this sort would yield artistic results. But we cannot assert that a sharply illuminated or a weakly illuminated photo is by itself better or worse. What is good or not good depends entirely on the situation.

In consideration of these givens, we must attempt to bring the object to be photographed into the foreground as much as possible. Totally into the foreground. If we carry out this principle, we can achieve monumental effects even on a small picture plane provided the object is made as large as possible. This, of course, means that we must not try to bring too much of the surroundings onto the plate. Largeness and simplicity are the rule.

The amateur might do well to study the works of modern painters such as the pictures of Fernand Khnopff. In one of his paintings, the artist goes so far as to let the upper half of the forehead of an upright figure disappear from the picture frame altogether with no concern for the lower parts. In spite of the small format, such artistic renderings appear large-scale. Similarly impressive are medallions and coins produced until the eighteenth century or woodcuts from the time of Dürer. The reason for their monumental artistic effect is, to a certain extent, the same. We will always find that in these instances the represented object has been much simplified and has been so enlarged that it fills the foreground and seems to spill over. There is barely a trace of perspective. Until the eighteenth century many old portraits are also marked by that characteristic. There are even a few artistically felt photographs that have taken the hint. But to most amateurs this rule seems unknown.

One will understand what this means with respect to portrait photos: how impressive and lively a head that takes up the entire picture plane appears. The image is also agreeable because all disturbing details are omitted. The photo may appear veiled, an accent that can enrich the artistic effect considerably under certain circumstances. We must not have every petty detail clearly spelled out in front of our eyes. Especially in a portrait photo that brings the face into the foreground and makes it seem as large as possible, a certain amount of vagueness stimulates the fantasy of the viewer to complement what he sees. We might then say that the picture is telling, it is mysteriously animated or spirited. In other words, what speaks is, in reality, not the picture but the stimulated fantasy that complements it with life or spirit and which, as it finds breathing space, transmits atmosphere or soul into the interpretation. In this, we see one of the greatest secrets of art, which even the amateur photographer can learn to master to a certain degree. The mastery of style is not created by what is declared but by what is omitted. The well-known procedures of highly evolved amateur photography that aim for simplification of tone, fading out of confusing details, softening of transitions of the black and white contrast are all based on this law of artistic effect.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Above all, the amateur must never forget that his photos are only studies. They must never attempt to be paintings. Amateur photos therefore assume a role next to sketches. If the amateur always keeps this in mind, he will not take any missteps. One only needs to bring to mind, for example, what painters enter in their sketchbooks. Here it is a characteristic head, there a hand, sometimes an interesting stone marker or a section of an artfully braided fence, a carved door, a flower window, a rose bower, an architectural view of a garden segment, an ancient vestibule, an antique piece of furniture, or a chimney corner, etc. The material is endless and is only limited by the ability of the amateur to see.

The difficult art of seeing is the product of education and draws on a multiplicity of intellectual and artistic interests. By no means can it only be achieved through the photographic activity itself. It is far from unimportant how we photograph a garden segment or a house. If the photograph is to be significant, then not only is the accidentally encountered illumination of importance, but also the artistic consideration of the material characteristics that, in turn, depend to a large degree on the specific point of view. It is decided by our sense of the architectural. But this is a matter that belongs to a different category.

Let the hint suffice for the moment that for the amateur, and especially for the beginner, there is no better approach than to start with details. Let us once more compare amateur photography to sketching. As described above, the sketch serves the purpose of sifting out from the confusing abundance of things one interesting part, one detail and to feature it as large and as impactful as possible. We do not want to pile as many details as possible into the picture; on the contrary, we want to choose one detail as the main subject and treat it as has been suggested in the above lines on amateur photography.

The comparison with the sketch is very informative. One could, of course, raise the objection that a sketch is only preparatory to a painting and is thus only a means to a larger purpose while amateur photography is an end in itself and, therefore, needs to obey different laws. This, however, would not be right. For, first of all, the sketch, as a branch of the graphic arts, is nowadays also often an end in itself, and demands, just like other types of reproductions, such as the lithograph or the woodcut, the same simplicity and monumentality that we demanded above from the photograph. Secondly, in some instances, amateur photography has indeed become a means to an end insofar as it frequently serves the painter, much like a sketch, as a preparation for the higher art of painting, as either a support for his memory or a correction for visual recall. Furthermore, we should not overlook the fact that in reality a great part of our modern naturalistic paintings, regardless of their format or technique are on the order of a study.

Amateur photography can contribute much of value to today's standing of culture as it does in the service of folk art and local history provided it obeys these limitations. Generalized views, comprehensive landscapes, panoramas and so on give us nothing. Rather, we must remember that in the world of appearances, at least to the extent that it is man-made, the small and the singular must be filled with beauty and art down to the last detail if we wish the whole and the large to be in order. There is no true insight to be gained if one only views things in a generalized way. When we admire the beauty of old cities or villages, everything must interest us from the sidewalk to the chimney. Let amateur photography be the expression of this newly awakened interest. It will offer spiritual and artistic nourishment if it renders all these details well and as large as possible.

But there is, as of yet, much amiss. If this purpose were not so generally misunderstood, we would have a better postcard industry. It, too, should follow the general trend of the time, take a higher view of the photographic culture, and comprehend that nobody is served by generalized views and boring genre-scenes and that instead we need something else. What we need are beautiful, characteristic details taken from close-up. Nature, life and the arts are full of them; we only have to open our eyes.

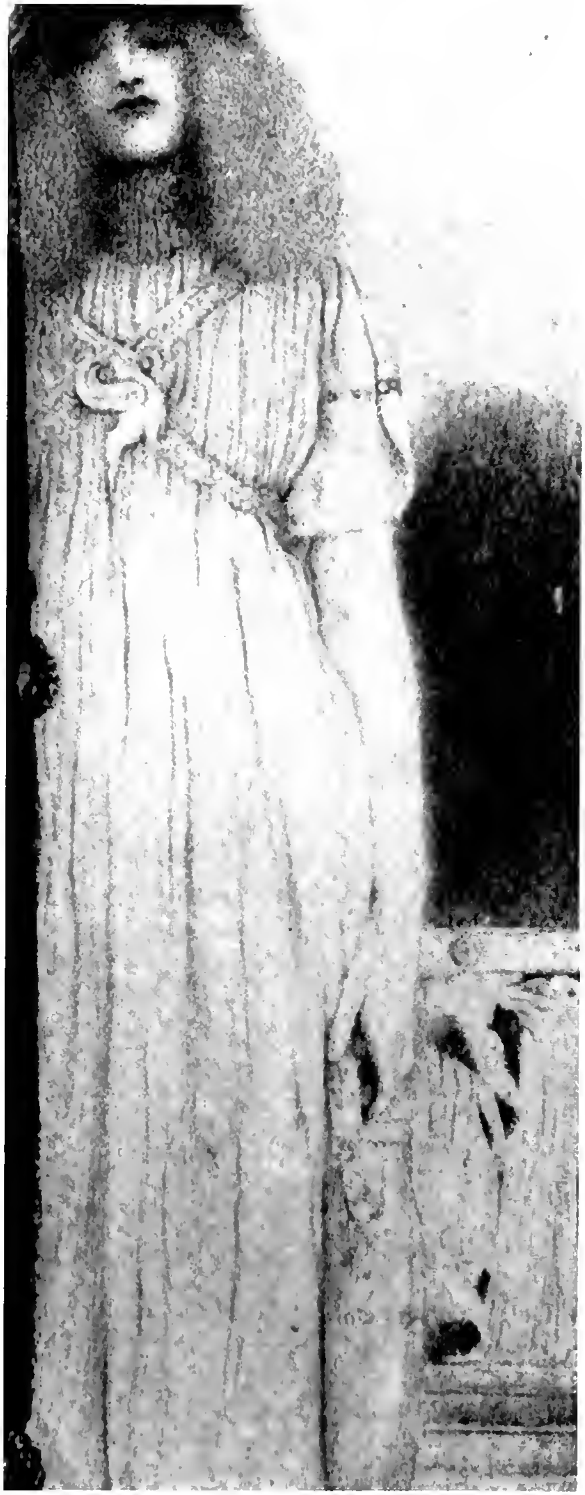
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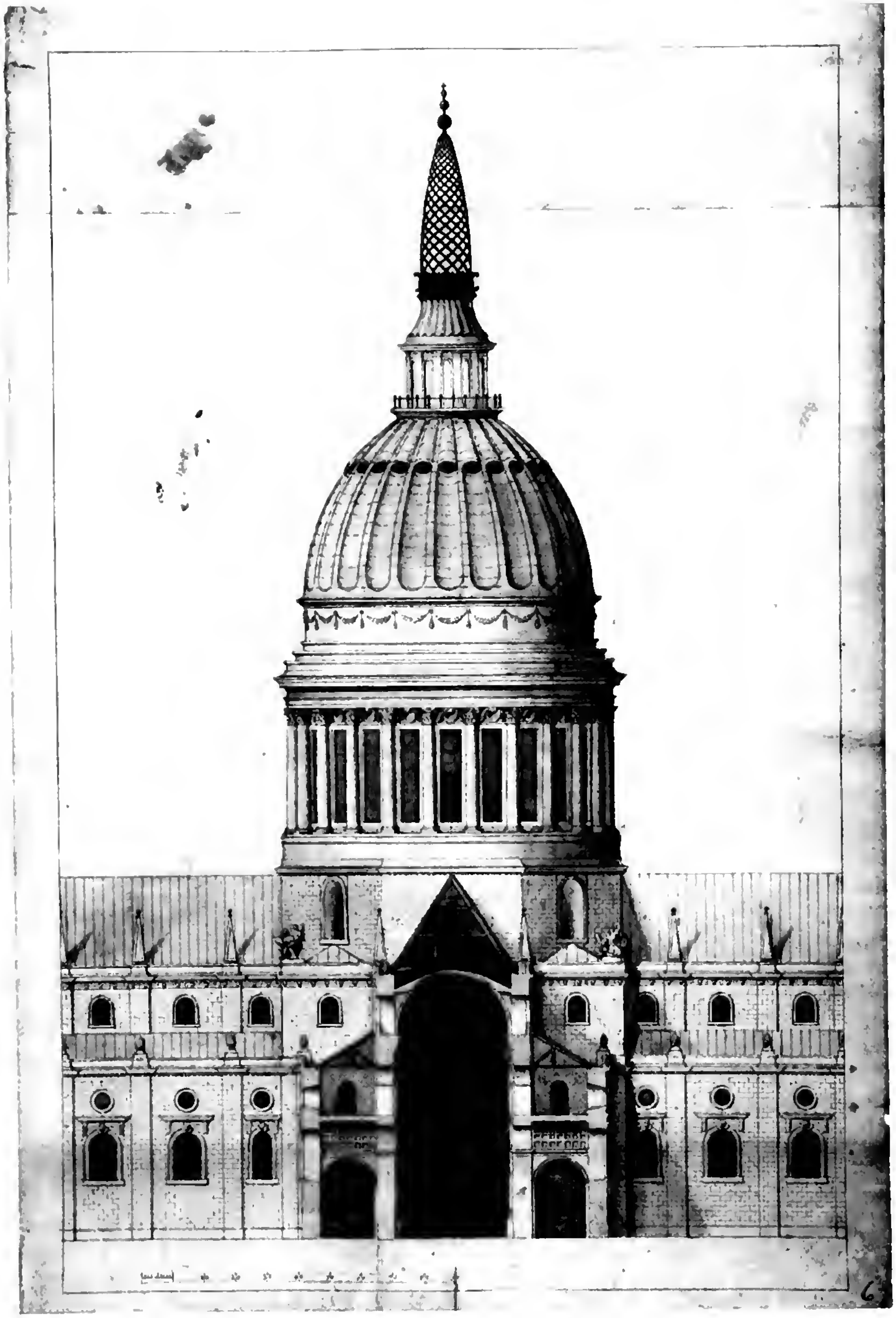
Figure 5: Example of a good photograph. Lux, *Geschmack im Alltag*, 201.
Figure 6: *Glas*, Heinrich Kühn, 1900.
Figure 7. *Dessin*, Ferdinand Khnopff, c.1898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Fashion and the Idea of National Style in Restoration England

Christopher Wren begins his "Tracts on Architecture," the most important record of his theoretical ideas, written in the mid-1670's, with two contrasting statements on the purpose of architecture. He proclaims in the first paragraph:

> *Architecture has its political Use; publick Buildings being the Ornament of a Country; it establishes a Nation, draws People and Commerce; makes the People love their native Country....*[1]

Wren pursued this goal as Surveyor General for his own nation from 1668 to 1710. He sought to create an architecture that would reflect and promote the glories of the restored Stuart monarchy and establish Great Britain among the leading nations of the world. At the same time, however, he pursued another objective expressed in the second paragraph of his "Tracts:" "Architecture aims at Eternity." Wren sought in his work to create an architecture for posterity, with essential qualities that gave it significance beyond his own culture. These two conflicting goals—to create a national style and to create a universal style—were formulated and reconciled by Wren based on a parallel made between fashion in architecture and fashion in clothing.

Wren never explicitly discusses the idea of a national style, but the concept is expressed in what he has to say about the work of England's closest neighbor—France. Wren saw French architecture as a standard to aspire to, but also a model to avoid. In 1666, immediately after his return from Paris, he attempted to meet that standard by proposing a huge dome, clearly influenced by French domed churches, to replace the Gothic spire of Old St. Paul's (Frontispiece, Fig. 2-4). In proposing it, he was probably reacting to comments he had heard in France about the low quality of English architecture. In his report on the cathedral, he relates, "It is pity, in the Opinion of our *Neighbours*, [that London] should longer continue the most unadorn'd of her Bigness in the World." Now, with a newly domed St. Paul's, Wren would create "an Ornament to his Majesty's most excellent Reign, to the Church of *England*, and to this great City."[2]

While he might admire and emulate French architecture, Wren also believed it was among those undesirable "fashions" that the English were forever borrowing from across the Channel. In a report of 1713 he complains about "*France*; the Fashions of which Nation we affected to imitate in all Ages, even when we were at Enmity with it."[3] Other English writers of the period also recognized that French culture had achieved predominance throughout Europe, and particularly in their own country. Thomas Sprat, in a letter to Wren from 1663, observes that the French "Tonge and Customs have gone farther in *Europe*, than their present King, is likely to carry their Armies."[4]

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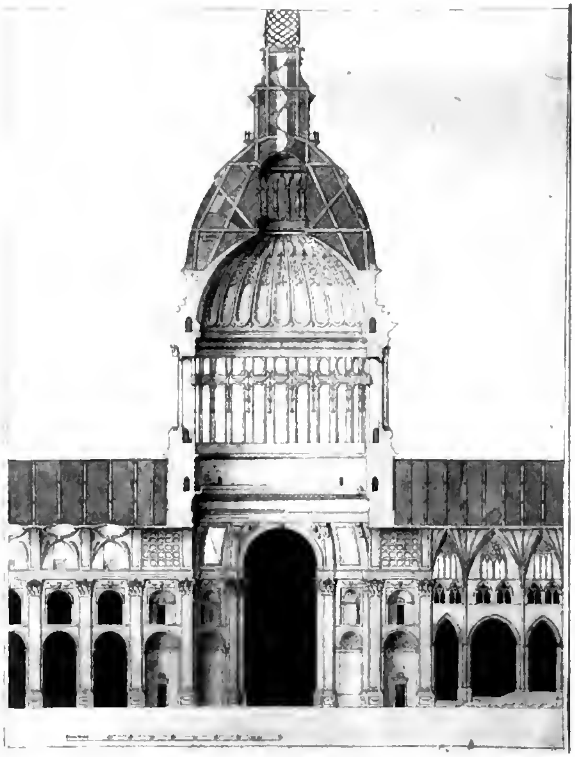
[1] Christopher Wren, "Tract I," *Parentalia*, ed Stephen Wren (London, 1750): 351; reprinted in Lydia Soo, *Wren's "Tracts" on Architecture and other Writings* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1998): 153.

[2] Wren, "Report on Old St. Paul's Before the Great Fire," 7 May 1666, *Parentalia*, 277, reprinted in Soo, 54

[3] Wren, "Report on Westminster Abbey to Francis Atterbury, Dean," 1713, *Parentalia*, 298, reprinted in Soo, 85

[4] Thomas Sprat, letter to Christopher Wren, 1663, *Parentalia*, 257.



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The negative tone of these comments about the influence of French fashions and customs is reflected in Wren's hypothesis that the Gothic style was adopted in England from France. Based on his detailed surveys of Gothic cathedrals at home and his observations of examples in Paris, Wren made a comparative study that led him to believe that the diffusion of the Gothic from France to England had occurred twice during the Middle Ages. The first time was during the Norman Invasion of 1066, which brought certain features found at Old St. Paul's. According to Wren in the *Parentalia*, the builders seemed Norman: "They made great Pillars without any graceful Manner; and thick Walls without Judgment. They... kept to the circular Arch; so much they retain'd of the *Roman* Manner...."[5]

The second wave of French influence, according to Wren in his 1711 report on Westminster Abbey, came after the "Saracen Style" was spread over Europe by the returning Crusaders, that is, sometime after the end of the eleventh century. The style made its way to France

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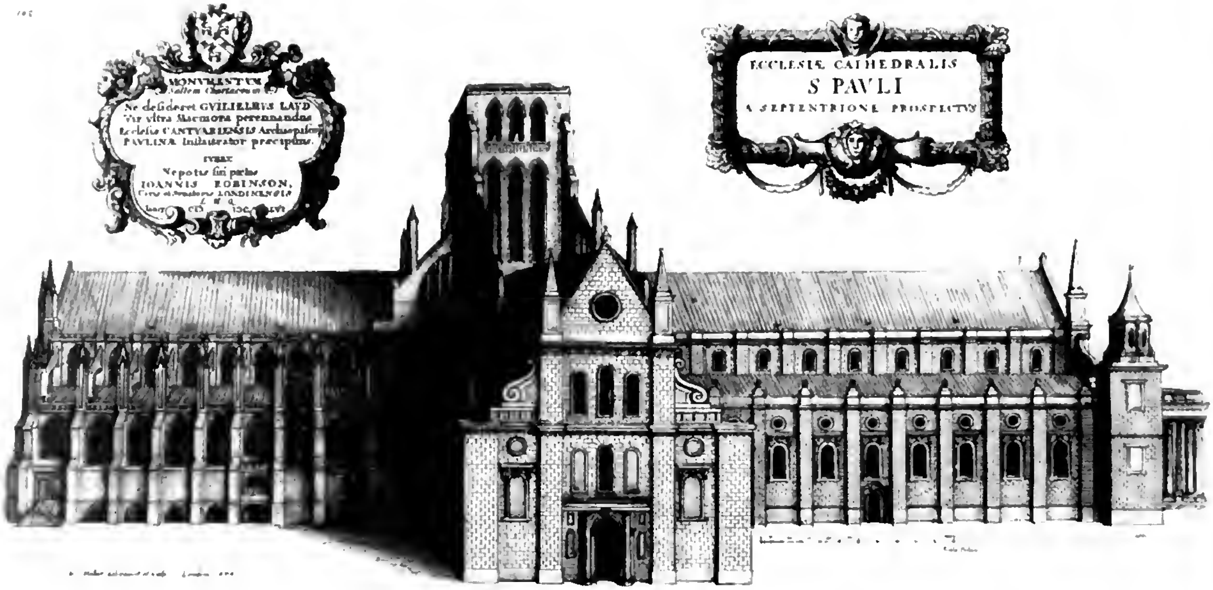
[5] Wren, "Of the ancient cathedral Churches of St Paul," *Parentalia*, 273; reprinted in Soo, 44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PAVLINÆ Instaurator praecipuus.
IOANNIS ROBINSON,
ECCLESIÆ CATHEDRALIS
S PAVLI
A SEPTENTRIONE PROSPECTVS

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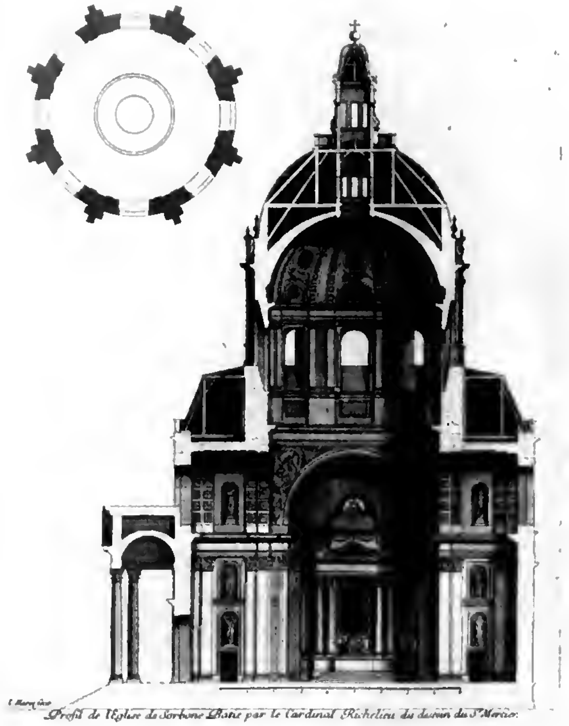
and from there to England. The buildings of the Saracens, Wren writes, "were fitted for small Stones, and Columns of their own Fancy, consisting of many Pieces; and their Arches were pointed without Key-stones." The French adopted these features and built structures that were, in Wren's words, "high beyond measure, with the Flutter of Arch-Buttresses."[6] Furthermore, in both French and English cathedrals, Wren observed, "the Pillars [of the nave]... yield, and bend inward from the weight of ye Vault of ye Ile."[7] While his writings indicate an understanding of the Gothic style as the product of particular cultural circumstances, Wren gave it a negative assessment, rejecting its "Rudeness"[8] in favor of what he called "the better & Roman Forme of Architecture."[9]

Wren's only first-hand knowledge of contemporary French architecture was from his ten-month trip to Paris in 1665-66. He was evidently deeply impressed. In his letter from Paris he declares his intention to bring back "almost all *France* in Paper," that is, architectural engravings, drawings, and treatises. He will be able to give, he writes, "a very good Account of all the best Artists of *France*," as well as "Observations on the present State of *Architecture*, *Arts*, and *Manufactures* in *France*."[10] These accounts probably would have contained comments on the buildings he visited, which included the Louvre, Le Vau's Collège des Quatre Nations, the Palais Mazarin, where Wren had his famous meeting with Bernini, and numerous châteaux around Paris. Wren presumably saw several domed churches that inspired his proposal for the crossing at Old St. Paul's, designed immediately after his return to London. In his report, he assures the commissioners that he has seen "several Structures of greater Expense than this, while they were in raising, conducted by the best Artists, *Italian* and *French*."[11] These domed churches must have included Lemercier's Church of the Sorbonne, which was the model for the section of Wren's design, but also possibly also his Oratoire, François Mansart's Val-de-Grâce and Visitation, and Guarini's Ste-Anne-la-Royale (Fig. 2, 4).


Profil de l'Eglise de Sorbonne Batie par le Cardinal Richelieu du dessein du S. Mercier.

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In contrast to his statements on the origin and nature of the Gothic in France and its inferiority to the Roman, we have unfortunately almost no record of Wren's assessment of the character and quality of contemporary French architecture. Furthermore, it is unknown what he thought about its perhaps inevitable adoption in England from France—"the Fashions of which Nation," he writes, "we affected to imitate in all Ages."[12]

Definite critical opinions *were* expressed in Restoration writings about another French "fashion" that was habitually brought to England—clothing. It is important to consider them, for Wren himself made the analogy between French architecture and clothing in his Letter from Paris. At Versailles he writes:

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[6] Wren, "Report on Westminster Abbey," *Parentalia*, 298; reprinted in Soo, 85.

[7] Wren, "Report on Salisbury Cathedral for Dr. Seth Ward, Bishop," 31 August 1668, Salisbury Cathedral Library MS 192, f. 4v; reprinted in Soo, 68. Cf Wren, "Report on Westminster Abbey," 1713, *Parentalia*, 300-301, reprinted in Soo, 88-9, describing how to counteract the horizontal thrust of the aisle vaults by adding a vertical load

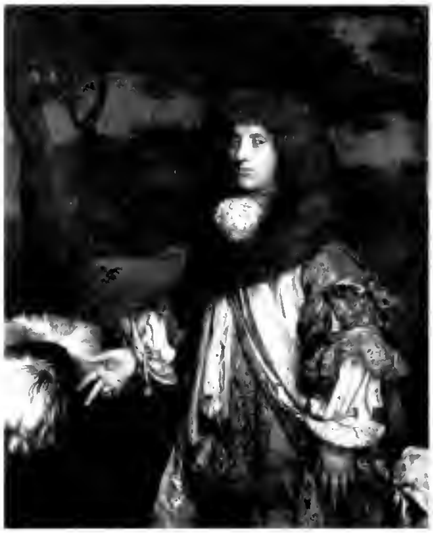
[8] Wren, "Report on Old St. Paul's Before the Fire," *Parentalia*, 275; reprinted in Soo, 50. He believes that it will be as easy to make "after a good *Roman* Manner, as to follow the *Gothick* Rudeness of the old Design."

[9] Wren, "Report on Salisbury Cathedral," f. 5; reprinted in Soo, 68.

[10] Wren, "Letter to a Friend from Paris," n. d., *Parentalia*, 262; reprinted in Soo, 106.

[11] Wren, "Report on St Paul's Before the Fire," *Parentalia*, 277, reprinted in Soo, 55

[12] Wren, "Report on Westminster Abbey," *Parentalia*, 298; reprinted in Soo, 85



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> *Not an Inch within but is crouded with little Curiosities of Ornaments: the Women, as they make here the Language and Fashions, and meddle with Politicks and Philosophy, so they sway also in Architecture; Works of Filgrand, and little Knacks are in great Vogue....*[13]

In contrast, he found, "the masculine Furniture of Palais Mazarine pleas'd me much better." At about the same time Wren was making these observations from Paris, Samuel Pepys recorded that "a new fashion for clothes,"[14] was being established in London expressly in opposition to the French. A letter of October 14th reports:

> *Our Nation having for severall yeers especially at this season too much used themselves to ape the French in their fashions, his Ma*^{ty} *for avoiding the like vanity in the future has been pleased to signify that he himselfe will wear a vest & not alter that mode.*[15]

Wren's close friend John Evelyn saw the king four days later, and in his diary gave the new fashion the misnomer, a "Persian vest,"[16] by which it has become known. Evelyn approved of Charles' decision, having written a few years earlier a satirical essay entitled *Tyrannus, or the Mode* (1661). In it he ridicules *"La Mode de France."* "It was a fine silken thing which I spied walking th'other day," he writes, covered with "as much Ribbon... as would have plundered six shops, and set up twenty Country Pedlars." The wearer, as he walked, resembled a "May-Pole" or a "Fregat newly rigg'd" with as much wind and motion (Fig. 5). Evelyn concluded his diatribe by calling for the newly restored king to reject such ridiculous and fluctuating French fashions and to "fix a *Standard* at Court" as an example "not only to his own *Nation*, but to all the *World* besides."[17] Charles did so in 1666 with his new fashion, which was followed by the English for only about five years (Fig. 6).

The standard that Evelyn proposed as an English national dress gives us some idea of what he saw as the undesirable qualities of the French mode. Advocating, in his words, "what is gracefull and put on with Reason," he called for "some Virile, and comely Fashion, which should incline to neither extream." For example, the breeches should be, Evelyn writes,

> *not so pinching as to need a Shooing-horn... nor so exorbitant as the Pantaloons, which are a kind of Hermaphrodite and of neither Sex: ... not too set in plaits as if I were supported with a pair of Ionic pillars....*

He continues, "I affect whatever is comely, and of use, ... chosing nothing that should be Capricious, nothing that were singular...."[18] For Evelyn, therefore, the French fashion lacked grace, reason, and usefulness, favored extremes and novelties, and was feminine. In contrast, Charles "solemnly" wore his "manly" new garment, according to Evelyn, which was also described by others as handsome and grave, and as demonstrating thrift, modesty, and plainness.[19]

The little that Wren does say about the character of contemporary French architecture echoes Evelyn's sentiments about French clothing. This architecture often had a feminine, rather than masculine character. Quoting again from Wren's Letter from Paris: "The Women, as they make here the Language and Fashions, ... so they sway also in Architecture; Works of Filgrand, and little Knacks are in great Vogue...."[20]

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[13] Wren, "Letter from Paris," *Parentalia*, 261; reprinted in Soo, 104

[14] Samuel Pepys, *The Diary of Samuel Pepys*, ed Robert Latham (London: Bell and Hyman, 1983): VII, 315.

[15] Public Record office, State Papers, Domestic, Charles II, vol. 174, no. 139, quoted in Esmond S. De Beer, "King Charles II's Own Fashion: an episode in Anglo-French Relations 1666-1670," *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes* II (1939): 106.

[16] John Evelyn, *The Diary of John Evelyn*, ed. E. S. De Beer (Oxford, Clarendon, 1955): III, 464-5.

[17] John Evelyn, *Tyrannnus, or the Mode* (London, 1661): 6, 11-12, 30.

[18] Ibid., 13, 15, 25, 29.

[19] Evelyn, *Diary*, III, 464, 467 (18 and 30 October 1666); Pepys, *Diary*, VII, 324, 315 (15 and 8 October 1666); Edward Chamberlayne, *Angliae Notitia*, 1669, 84-85.

A theoretical foundation for this associated rhetoric on architecture and dress, which constitutes an early expression of the idea of national style, is found in Wren's concept of "customary causes" in architecture. In his "Tracts" Wren gives an empirical definition of beauty that reflects his scientific background: "Beauty is a Harmony of Objects, begetting Pleasure by the Eye." Thus, for Wren beauty is an optical effect, an appearance, not a reality, triggered by two causes. The "natural" causes are geometry, uniformity, and proportion. The "customary" causes are "Familiarity," "Novelties," "particular Inclination," and custom. According to Wren they "breed a Love to Things not in themselves lovely." That is, the customary causes are outside influences relating to the psychology of the observer as an individual and a member of society. Because of the impact of the customary causes on the intellect, beauty is perceived in objects that in themselves have no true qualities of natural beauty. In this case, Wren writes, the "Fancy blinds the Judgment."[21] That is, the imagination, which works without rules or authority, overrules the reason. Certain physical aspects of objects, which are not naturally beautiful, are accepted and become "Modes and Fashions." For a given moment, they represent the "Taste" of a particular individual or society.[22]

Wren's assessment of contemporary French architecture as a temporal and capricious fashion, akin to clothing, clearly fits into his category of customary causes. It is interesting to note that at about the same time, another scientist/architect, the Frenchman Claude Perrault, postulated the idea of "arbitrary" beauties that also invoked a parallel between architecture and clothing in the context of the court of Louis XIV.[23]

Although Wren writes that in the customary causes "lies the great Occasion of Errors; here is tried the Architect's Judgment," he did not call for their elimination. Rather, he recognized their important role in architecture. "Fancy blinds the Judgment," Wren stated, yet he believed that the imagination or intuition was essential to the work of the architect. It must be informed, however, by "the Study of Antiquity."[24] That is, the architect must have an understanding of history to recognize how custom, novelty, and prejudice created inventions, which could only become transient modes and fashions. Furthermore, standards of taste must be established for society by an authority with a reasonable judgment and informed imagination.

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[20] Wren, "Letter from Paris," *Parentalia*, 261; reprinted in Soo, 104.

[21] Wren, "Tract I," *Parentalia*, 351-2; reprinted in Soo, 154-5.

[22] Wren, "Tract II," *Parentalia*, 353-4; reprinted in Soo, 157-8. Wren, "Report on Westminster Abbey," *Parentalia*, 302; reprinted in Soo, 90.

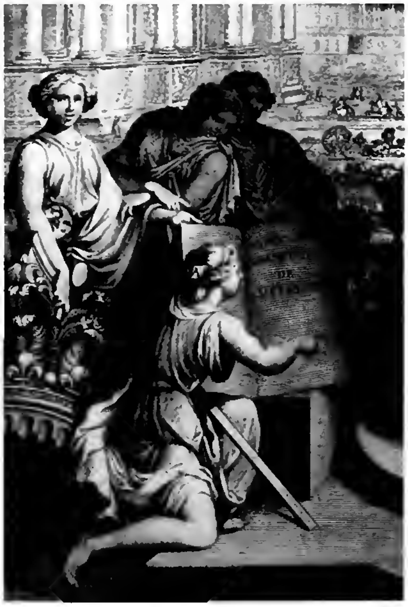
[23] Claude Perrault, *Ordonannce des cinq espèces de colonnes selon la mèthode des Anciens* (Paris, 1683); translated as *Ordonnance for the Five Kinds of Columns After the Method of the Ancients*, trans. Indra K. McEwan (Santa Monica, CA: Getty Center, 1992): 50-51. See discussion in Soo, 141-7.

[24] Wren, "Tract I," *Parentalia*, 351-2; reprinted in Soo, 154-5.

For England, the authority to establish a standard of good taste was Wren himself as Surveyor General. Nevertheless, Wren made no deliberate attempt to create an architectural equivalent to the so-called "Persian vest," the national dress from 1666 until about 1670 that replaced the French modes. Nor did he emulate Perrault, who, through the example Louvre's East façade and his treatise on the five orders, was instrumental in establishing a strict standard of classicism for the architecture of Louis XIV.[25] Instead, having first recognized the idea of national style, Wren went on to reject it. In a passage immediately following his criticism of the femininity of French architecture, he writes: "Building certainly ought to have the Attribute of eternal, and therefore [is] the only Thing uncapable of new Fashions."[26] Wren believed that the architect, in order to build for eternity, must control the customary causes and transcend current fashion and mode. He must build for "natural beauty"—geometry, uniformity, and proportion—essential principles founded on the laws of nature, which, for Wren, were the "true Test." At the same time the architect must use the classical Greek and Roman orders, which, according to Wren are "the only Thing uncapable of Modes and Fashions."[27]

Wren's belief in the universal validity of the classical orders was based on his new hypothesis of their origins. For Wren the first order was the "Tyrian." Although he never depicted it, he described the Tyrian as a primitive, proto-classical order that replicated the form and proportions of the mature tree and was used at the Temple of Solomon, a building dictated by God.[28] The ancients created out of this order, admittedly as "Experiments," the Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian. Yet for Wren the classical orders were more than just transient fashions. They were, he wrote, "founded upon the Experience of all Ages, promoted by the vast Treasures of all the great Monarchs, and Skill of the greatest Artists and Geometricians."[29] They were used in magnificent buildings, some of them Wonders of the World, including the Temple of Diana at Ephesus, which was reconstructed by Wren.[30] The classical orders, therefore, constituted legitimate national styles which, because they were invented by great civilizations and ultimately had a natural and divine origin, continued to have validity for all societies, now and in the future.

Wren's arguments that the classical orders were beyond the influence of mode and fashion can be understood in part as a reaction against the example of France where a new *"Gallick Order"* had been invented. In 1671 a competition was held to design an alternative to the Roman composite order, a new order to be placed in the attic story of the Cour Carrée. The winning entry by Perrault, illustrated in the frontispiece of his Vitruvius edition, was a Corinthian capital with *fleurs-de-lis* instead of acanthus (Fig. 7).[31] According to Evelyn, it also had "*Cocks-Feathers* and *Cocks-Combs*," as well as "*Chains* and *Ribbons*,"[32] a description very much suggesting feminine clothing. Wren, finding the Gallic order to lack the "Grace" of the Corinthian, decried the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[25] See Soo, 147-8.

[26] Wren, "Letter from Paris," *Parentalia*, 261; reprinted in Soo, 104.

[27] Wren, "Tract I," *Parentalia*, 351, reprinted in Soo, 153-4

[28] Wren, "Tract IV," *Parentalia*, 359-60; reprinted in Soo, 168-9 and "Tract V," ms. in RIBA "Heirloom" copy of *Parentalia*, 7-8; reprinted in Soo, 191-2.

[29] Wren, "Tract I," *Parentalia*, 351, reprinted in Soo, 154.

[30] Wren, "Tract IV," *Parentalia*, 360-61; reprinted in Soo, 169-73.

[31] Wren, "Tract II," *Parentalia*, 355; reprinted in Soo, 159. See Jean Marie Pérouse de Montclos, "Le Sixième Ordre d'Architecture, ou la Pratique des Ordres Suivant les Nations," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 36 (1977): 223-40.

[32] John Evelyn, "Account of Architects and Architecture," published in Roland Fréart de Chambray, *A Parallel of the Ancient Architecture with the Modern*, ed. John Evelyn, 2nd edition (London, 1707): 46.

invention of new national orders, "Experiments in this kind being greatly expenseful, and Errors incorrigible."[33] Instead, the classical orders and natural beauty should form the basis of English architecture, just as they had for the great ancient civilizations. Such an architecture would also ultimately transcend its own time and place.

In examining his architecture, historians have long been aware of Wren's selective borrowing of motifs from contemporary monuments, particularly in France, which he continued to learn about through published engravings after his trip to Paris. For example, in the so-called "Definitive" design for the new St. Paul's from 1683, he borrowed the Dome of the Invalides, which he knew from an elevation published that same year.[34] In the final facade of 1694, he adapted the coupled colonnades of Perrault's Louvre, dating from 1667.[35] In an early scheme of 1695 for the Royal Hospital at Greenwich, he adopted features from French château planning, for example Le Vau's Versailles from 1670.[36] Given his theory, this borrowing would have been acceptable if such features were interpreted as natural and classical, and hence universally applicable. At the same time, however, his theory accommodates such borrowing even if it were viewed as customary and culturally specific. For Wren, the customary causes were essentially arbitrary, and hence selection and adaptation of modes and fashions were at the discretion of the wise and authoritative architect.

While Wren, along with his countrymen, might recognize the formation of a national style of dress and of architecture across the Channel, as England's leading architect, he pursued a more complex objective. He embraced the Classical style, universally applicable due to its foundation in the laws of nature, the truth of Scripture, and the experience of the greatest ancient civilizations. Using the Classical style, he sought to create an architecture for England, a national style to rival those of her neighbors. This English national style, due to the taste and skill of the architect, would go beyond custom and fashion to attain, like that of the Greeks and Romans, universal validity. For Wren, architecture "establishes a Nation," but also "aims at Eternity." By rewriting the origins of architecture and redefining the nature of beauty, he was able to have it both ways.

Illustration Credits

Frontispiece: Christopher Wren, Pre-Fire Design for Old St. Paul's, London, 1666, elevation and section through nave.

Fig. 2: Christopher Wren, Pre-Fire Design for Old St. Paul's, London, 1666, longitudinal section.

Fig. 3: Old St. Paul's, London, from the north, drawn by Wenceslas Hollar, 1656.

Fig 4: Jacques Lemercier, Church of the Sorbonne, Paris, section.

Fig. 5: Gerard Soest, portrait of John Hay, Second Marquis of Tweeddale, c. 1665.

Fig. 6: Gerard Soest, portrait of Cecil Calvert, 2nd Baron Baltimore and his grandson.

Fig. 7: Claude Perrault, design for a Gallic order, 1673.

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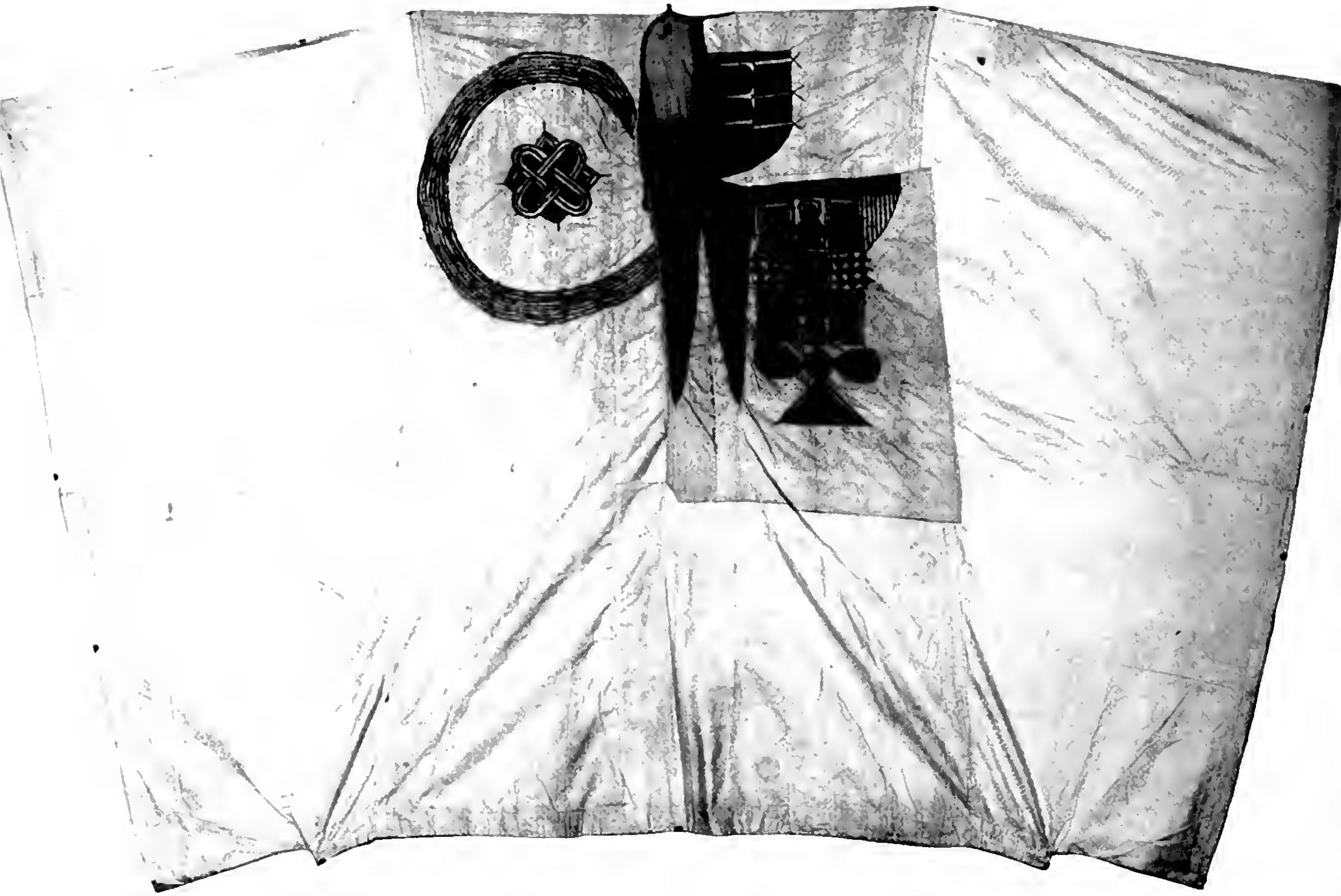
[33] Wren, "Tract II," *Parentalia*, 355, reprinted in Soo, 159, and Tract I, *Parentalia*, 351; reprinted in Soo, 154

[34] Engraving by Jean Marot in L. J de Boullencourt, *Description Général... des Invalides* (Paris, 1683). See John Summerson, "J. H Mansart, Sir Christopher Wren and the dome of St. Paul's Cathedral," *Burlington Magazine* 132 1042 (January 1990): 32-36.

[35] Eduard F. Sekler, *Wren and His Place in European Architecture* (New York: Macmillan, 1956): 143.

[36] John Summerson, *Architecture in Britain 1530-1830*, 9th edition (New Haven Yale University Press, 1993): 227.



Spatial “wRapping”:
A Speculation on Men’s Hip-Hop Fashion

Since the early 1990s men’s hip-hop fashion has become ubiquitous. All across the country, in the American heartland, in popular advertising, and even in elitist private academies, one can find young people wearing the latest “urban” apparel, decked out in FUBU, Pelle Pelle, Wu Wear, Karl Kani, etc. Piggybacking on the wave of globalization, hip-hop’s influence has spread: oversized “goose bombers,” hoodies, rugby shirts, baggy jeans and variations of Timberland/Lugz boots are seen across the world.

While the purpose of this essay is to speculate on some of the cultural references, reverberations, and oblique connections suggested by the late twentieth-century and early twenty-first-century hip-hop street fashion, it is not intended to offer definitive answers.[1] Instead, I posit a series of possible scenarios that theoretically attempt to link the development of hip-hop fashion to African-diasporic resistance. This essay is meant to form a background for further discussion and speculation on a current cultural practice. This, I believe, marks an evolution from a definition of space through ephemeral elements such as music and dance into the development of a conception of personal/cultural space that is based on the material practices of clothing and architecture.[2] Most importantly, I want to situate the eruption of hip-hop fashion beyond Black culture within the context of a longer tradition of sartorial flamboyance born out of material and political stresses.

Resistance

It would be useful, if not too general, to argue that there exists—within the U.S. and abroad—an overarching African-diasporic sensibility that could help explain the complexity of the creative processes that hip-hop manifests in manners of dress, modes of dance, and music. What I will argue, however, is that hip-hop is a non-Western aesthetic. Its affinities syncopate with other forms of Black creative resistance including Jamaican sound systems, Puerto Rican and Dominican *sonero* styles, inner city resourcefulness, and Afro-Caribbean-Brazilian movement forms such as *capoeira* and *mani*.

Turning from the spatial plane to the temporal, one sees a periodic resurfacing of multiple but consistent themes of “Africanisms.” Contemporary hip-hop fashion is one of these controversial yet sustained eruptions. It makes explicit the tensions between generations within the African-American community. It reveals the interface of capitalist consumerism with cultural self-identity movements and the struggle for self-expression. Hip-hop is an identity statement that simultaneously articulates a resistance to a deep-seated mental colonization and a utopian re-imagining of the possibilities of resistant identities.

Clothing is both representational and material, offering the promise of more substantive articulations of personal and cultural identities in space. Hip-hop culture has not only broken from traditional Eurocentric notions of individual space; it has formalized this rupture into what could be considered an elementary architecture. The logic is quite clear: skin for African Americans—and by

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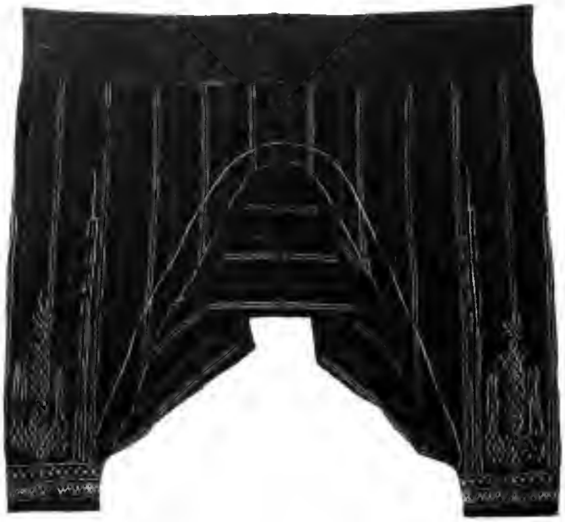
[1] Women’s hip-hop fashion will not be the focus of this essay because of its overwhelming complexity This is a discussion that requires its own space.

[2] Clothing is considered to be the first shelter of the body; it is a shallow physical space.



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extension clothing—has historically been both a mark of oppression and a site of resistance, the bedrock upon which a dislocated people, lacking other institutionalized social space, may construct a home. Many find hip-hop's appeal in the fact that it symbolizes resistance. Even those who are not part of an African-diasporic experience can inhabit through hip-hop fashion the many characteristics that dominant white culture attributes to Black resistance, including hyper-masculinity, "gangsta-ness," danger, mystique, urbanity, physicality, and street credibility. One can, in other words, wear the skin of resistance without paying the price.[3] In the U.S., this mainstream appropriation of hip-hop fashion has occurred largely amongst middle-class adolescents, most of whom are white and who wear the hip-hop "skin" only as an expression of generational dissidence. Most of them will probably grow out of this socially accepted demonstration of rebellion, and later see their flirtation with blackness and hip-hop culture as a passing phase. However, as a living process of creative resistance rooted in Black diasporic experience, hip-hop is no passing phase. Furthermore, alongside creative and resistant utopian possibilities, hip-hop also functions to transmit white-centered American global culture and capital far beyond its boundaries.

Three origin stories[4]

It has been established that hip-hop music and dance are linked to West African and African-diasporic traditions. It is not unreasonable to postulate that hip-hop clothing may share similar origins. Within the tradition of West African clothing, large pieces of untailored rectangular fabric are put to multiple uses as pants, tunics, and head wraps. For pants, large swaths of fabric, which sometimes reach the length of seven feet, are gathered together causing a sagging appearance in the mid-section of the silhouette.[5] The West-African shirt is described as a large piece of cloth or small strips of fabric sewn together to become a whole with openings for the head and the arms to pass through. This traditional type of clothing is still worn in some parts of Western Africa (Frontispiece, Figure 2). The following quote is the description of a Senegalese male dress from 1686:

> *The apparel of the prime men is a sort of shirt, or frock of striped cotton of several colors; such as yellow, blue, white, black... Some of these are plaited about the neck, others plain, having only a hole, or slit for the head to pass through, and reach from the neck to the knees with large open sleeves. Under this cloth, they wear a thick cloth, made up after the fashion of long wide breeches, by them called* Jouba... *plaited and tied around the bottom; and is very inconvenient, as much obstructing the motion of the legs, because of the wideness and the thickness of the cloth it is made of.*[6]

One attribute of male hip-hop fashion that serves as a connection to resurfaced African aesthetic sensibilities can be found in its silhouette. The male hip-hop silhouette sets itself apart from contemporary American clothing trends by means of its loose-fitting contour and its preference for baggy as opposed to form-fitting garments (Fig. 3). Oversized jerseys and extra baggy pants that taper slightly and gather down around the ankles are the main-stay of the fashion.

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[3] That is, without facing the circumstances that necessitated the resistance in the first place.

[4] Although foundation myths can be distracting, the following accounts are meant to offer a background against which the hip-hop silhouette can be investigated.

[5] "The 'silhouette' is the term used by the clothing industry to describe the cut or shape of a suit... the shape of a garment sets the tone of a person's appearance... The fabric and details, which may add to a suit's attractiveness, and even the fit should be of secondary concern, since it is the silhouette that actually determines the longevity of the garment." Alan J. Flusser, *Style and the Man* (New York: Harper Style, 1996): 25.

[6] Cado Masto cited in Roy Sieber, *African Textiles and Decorative Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1972): 23.

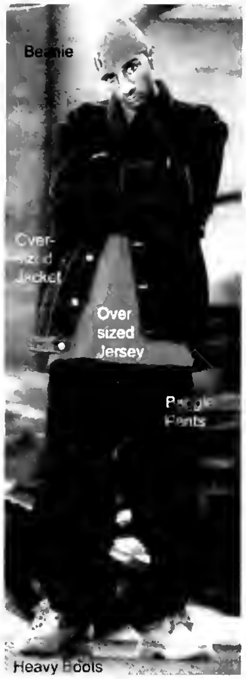
It is difficult to make a definitive connection to clothing traditions of West Africa at this time, given the processes that have led to, what Orlando Patterson calls, "natal alienation" and exile from the African continent. The erasure of history through slavery, Western colonization of the African continent, and cultural genocide have left the Black diasporic identity with vast silences and unreadable historical gaps. Hip-hop clothing speaks a formal language that attempts to bridge some of those gaps and silences by means of a patchwork process that operates across discrepant historical spaces.

Another possible parallel evolution, one that draws rather from an American source, is the "sack suit." The draping semi-bell shape appearance of the male hip-hop clothing can be seen as an exaggerated alteration of the sack suit silhouette, which is arguably one of the major types of contemporary western men's fashion.[7] Characteristic of this silhouette is a shapeless rectangular form with a non-darted torso and narrow unpadded shoulders:

> *[The sack suit] hides the shape of its wearer and takes away any sense of individuality. The reason it has managed to exist successfully for such a long period of time is simply that it appeals to the common denominator. Since it is so anonymous, it offends no one, enabling the wearer to walk into any environment and be acceptably attired.*[8]

The hip-hop silhouette both literally and figuratively expands on this image by having the appearance of one-size-fits-all. A men's fashion style that appears to bridge the West African silhouette and the American Sack Suit is the "Zoot suit," a highly stylized formal suit, with large baggy pants and a long overcoat, which is said to have African-diasporic roots.[9] During the late 1930s and 40s, this style was extremely popular within Chicano, Latino, and Black communities.[10]

Socio-economic and environmental factors also impact male hip-hop fashion. One example is the necessary ability to make the best of whatever is available. Children and adults alike commonly wear "hand-me-down" clothing, which does not quite fit properly. In this situation, it is preferable for an article of clothing to be slightly too large than to be slightly too small. One can also observe the practice of wearing oversized clothing in institutions where uniforms are required. The disproportionate number of African-diasporic peoples incarcerated during their lifetime thus offers a possible referent for hip-hop. In many jail systems, the issuance of clothing has been standardized for years with the result that inmates are provided with oversized clothing and no belts to keep their pants up. It is possible to imagine these men integrating mannerisms and values cultivated in prison into life outside of prison after their release.[11]



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All of these factors may have played a part in the development and the perpetuation of male hip-hop fashion; but then again, it is possible that other factors were more influential. Hip-hop, after all, could just be a fad whose time has come. Perhaps, instead of going away, it will continue to evolve and transform itself like many before it: spirituals, gospel, blues, jazz, rock-n-roll, soul, funk, soul food, and "ebonics."

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[7] Flusser, 26.

[8] Ibid.

[9] Shane White and Graham White, *Stylin': African American Expressive Culture from its Beginnings to the Zoot Suit* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998): 253-54

[10] Ibid. It is important to note that this is one of few instances in American history during which Chicano peoples chose to identify with African-diasporic peoples.

[11] Of the possible scenarios presented here, the socio-economic status of black people and the "institutional connection" clearly have the most contemporary impact.

Elements of hip-hop fashion

It is hard to identify a pattern as to how the elements of hip-hop fashion are chosen. Football jerseys and sneakers, as well as hockey jerseys, are the staple element of this style. The color composition and the logos on the clothing communicate territorial and social affiliations. The components of this fashion, much like hip-hop music, are a "sampling" from a pluralistic reservoir, from many diverse sources traversing the terrains of high fashion, working/industrial clothing, sports gear, and so on.[12]

If one item of clothing had to be selected as being foundational within men's hip-hop fashion, it would probably be the trademark baggy and sagging jeans. Jeans were originally workers' clothing, but they have gradually become a staple in contemporary mainstream fashion for both men and women. Hip-hop fashioners are possibly one of the first to extend this typology into baggy and extra baggy jeans. Baggy is an adjective related more to a manner of carrying the pants and less to a style of cut.[13] This stylized manner of wearing pants is very important as an example of hip-hop fashion's ability to transform the wearer's experience in space. Analyzing the wearing of baggy pants, we see an alteration in body movement, an adaptation of devices such as belts and ropes, and a system of overlapping and layering materials. It is important for the pants to drape from the body to the point of nearly falling down. Because the fabric gathers between the legs and the censure of the pants, a person's walking pattern changes, enhancing the syncopation in movement. Each person has to individually develop and negotiate their own style of walking and keeping their pants up while maintaining the appearance of effortless motion.[14] Another consequence of the "low riding" of the pants is that the wearer's underwear is exposed, underneath the tunic-like tops. This requires the person to wear colorful, attractive, and sensual underwear for the purpose of providing voyeuristic moments to others.

Work boots, another element of hip-hop clothing, are a remnant from the industrial working class. In milder climates or in the spring and summer, basketball sneakers coexist with boots. Often times, shoes are worn with untied laces so that the heels can be dragged upon the ground, adding an auditory effect to the rhythm of the walk. Their weighty appearance pays homage to the reality of gravity and groundedness. However, immediately behind this expression of reality exists the notion of "lightness" and being free and unbounded within space.

Regardless of what type—jersey, button-down shirt, winter "Bomber" jacket, or "hoodie"—tops have to be oversized and loose-fitting in order to provide space to move. This adds to an appearance of increased body mass. There exists a preference for flaring at the base of the garment, as opposed to a tapered, tucked-in, or straight hang from the shoulders, giving the silhouette a bell shape. Thus, these three primary components of clothing (shirt, pants and boots) work together to enhance the effect that gravity has upon the body. Everything appears to become weighted down at the lower portions of the body. The appearance of a slow, fluid, and rhythmic motion often contrasts with the actual attributes of the body beneath the clothes.

Hip-hop headgear consists of a series of artifacts that are quite particular to African-influenced hairstyling. The "doo rag" a cloth that has conventionally been worn at night to style the hair has finally found the light of day within hip-hop fashion. Worn like an Islamic turban, it furthers the image of hip-hop's African origin. A variety of hats are worn, and the only common characteristic of these various hats is that they sit on the head at an angle often displaying some kind of logo (Fig. 4). Logos on hip-hop clothing can be indicators of many things: advertisement, political statements, material wealth, or territorial signification. All these symbols reinforce the use of clothing as a site of socio-spatial projection.[15] The logo claims space through complex and convoluted social relationships alluding to the wearer's economic prowess, place of origin, or affiliations, informing all who care to read the signs. There also exist within the world of men's hip-hop fashion many other accessories. One example is the use of heavy jewelry, which supports allusions to heaviness and massiveness as well as material wealth and power. Adorning the body, jewelry may include large necklaces, earrings, bracelets, rings, and anklets as well as gold and platinum-covered teeth. With regional variations on common themes, such accessories play an important part in the makeup of the hip-hop mystique and enhance connections to the African continent.

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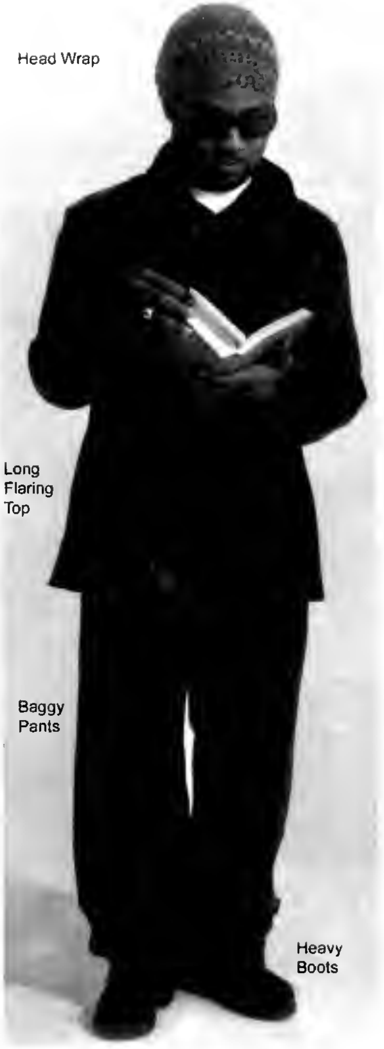
[12] A fundamental principle of hip-hop is sampling and absorption.

[13] The style of cut is something that manufacturers use for marketing purposes. In hip-hop fashion, for example, it is desirable to wear a pair of pants with a size 44" waist, even though the person might have a 32" waist.

[14] Some people go so far as to develop special tie systems under their clothing

This list of elements found within men's hip-hop fashion is far from complete; in fact, this account only begins to scratch the surface of the origins, content, and implications of each component. The main objective of this essay has been to present hip-hop fashion as a cultural practice that does not conform to preconceived western notions of fashion, that is fashion understood as coming from high culture down. Instead, it may be said that hip-hop fashion "just grew" within the mass of African-diasporic experience.[16] Hip-hop culture thus continues a tradition of resistance to cultural erasure. It is my hope that that through speculations such as this essay, African-diasporic cultures may be able to construct more substantive "homes" for themselves. This is why it is important to study, contemplate an understand the creative processes of these cultures in the past, present, and future. That may be too much to ask from something like hip-hop fashion; nevertheless it a small, albeit significant, step in a process of cultural rebuilding.



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[15] As such, logos are similar to *kente*, clothes that are worn in Ghana and other West African countries and that communicate social status, clan, family affiliations, and proverbs.

[16] "Just grew" is an Anglocized version of "jus' grew," a term used by Ishmael Reed in his novel *Mumbo Jumbo*. I use it in this essay to explain the pluralistic origins of many African-diasporic cultural developments. Like jazz music, hip-hop fashion cannot be linked to only one specific person or source, but it is the result of many factors working in similar but varied ways. Ishmael Reed, *Mumbo Jumbo* (New York, Doubleday, 1972).

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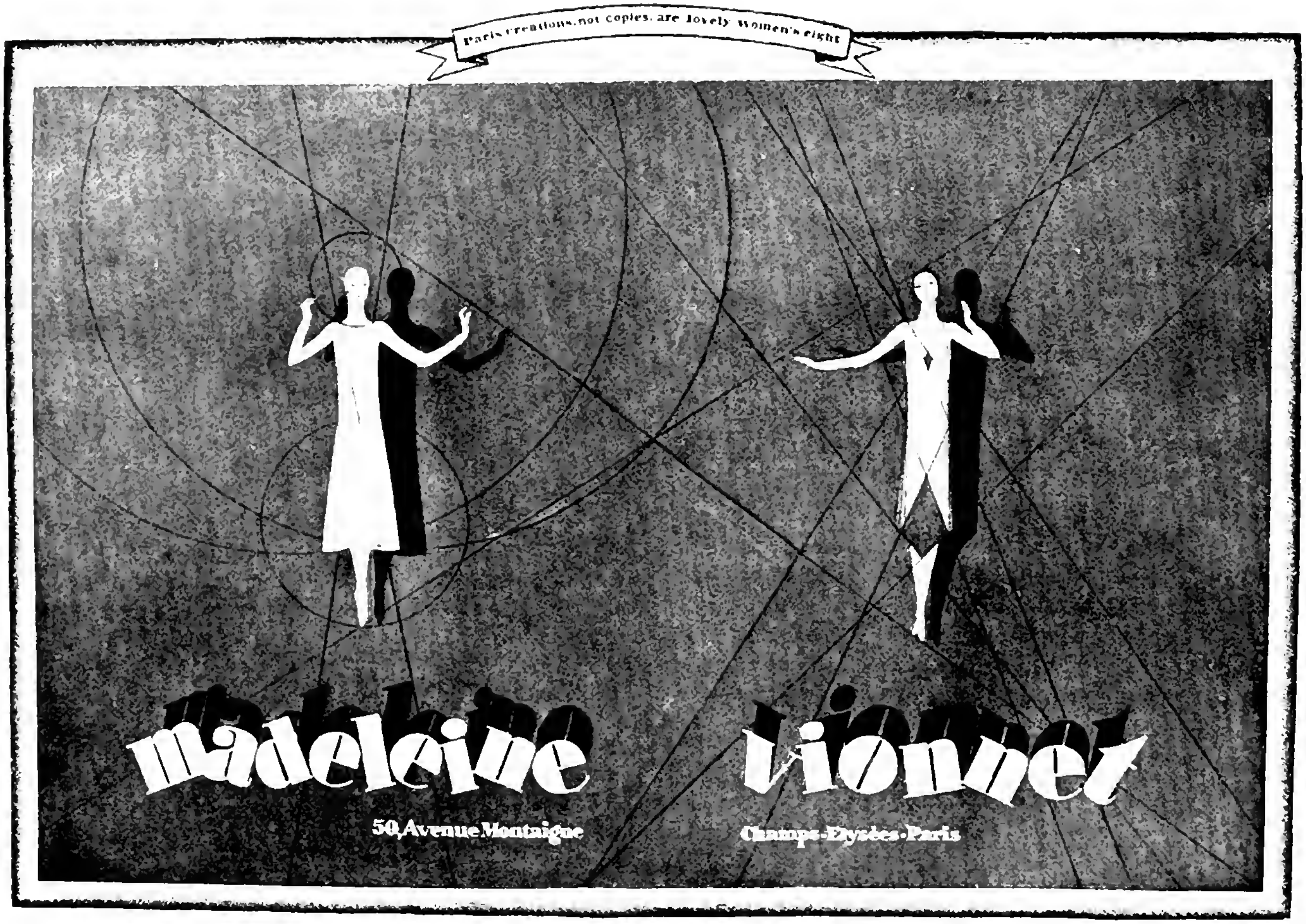
Frontispiece: West African Top, Museum of Modern Art.
Figure 2: West African Pants, Museum of Modern Art.
Figure 3: Dirty Denim Advertisement, *Vibe Magazine*, November 2000. Photograph Michael Benabib.
Figure 4: Renegades of Funk, *Vibe Magazine*, April 2001. Photograph Josephine Shiele.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Champs-Elysées-Paris

Vionnet: Fashion's Twentieth Century Technician

While walking down Fifth Avenue recently, I stopped to check out the Saks Fifth Avenue windows and found several Dior gowns on display. Those in the first windows were Dior's designer Galliano's latest attempt to promote a new fashion. As the gowns seemed more like unwearable costumes, their acceptance seemed unlikely. In the window at the south end, however, there were several "wearables" by the same designer. A few were bias cuts with cowl necklines, a style originated in the thirties by the Paris haute couture designer Madeleine Vionnet. I thought: Vionnet's work is still in fashion, even in the year 2001.

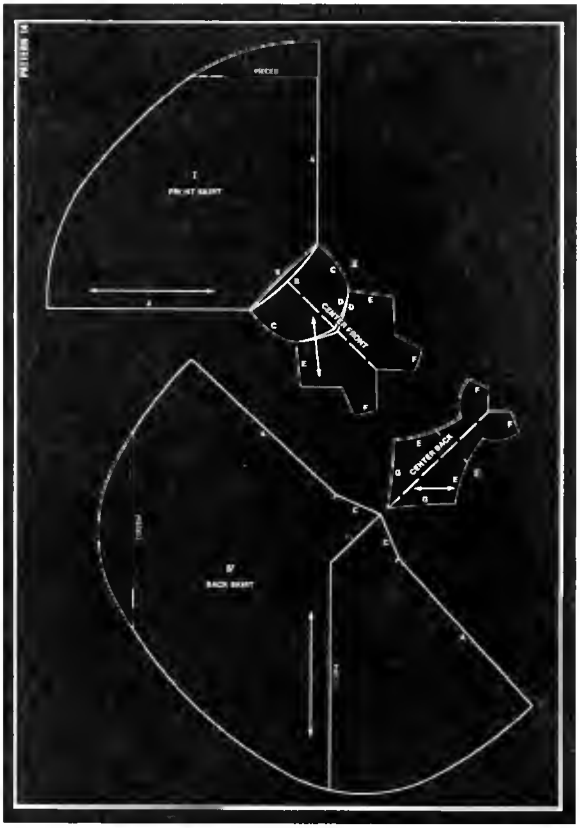
That should not be surprising given the current state of fashion. While there have been designers who do have a following and whose work is, like Vionnet's, instantly recognizable, since the sixties there have been relatively few innovations that have had mass appeal other than the adoption of blue jeans and T-shirts. We turned retro in the seventies and have been retro ever since. Now it seems that we would like to wear dresses again. Here we are in the year 2001, and the present "in" fashion is vintage clothing. Even the prestigious Bergdorf Goodman has installed a department for these used garments.

Born in 1876 in a suburb of Paris, Madeleine Vionnet started working as an apprentice to a local dressmaker at the age of eleven. Soon, she became a dressmaker excelling in fitting and pattern making, first at Kate Rielly's in London and then at the Callot Soeurs in Paris. In 1907, she became a *modeliste* at the house of Doucet. By 1912, with promised financial assistance, she opened her first house at 22 rue de Rivoli. Although the business closed in 1914 due to the advent of WWI, the war years proved to be a valuable gestation period for Vionnet. It was during these years, for example, that she visited Italy where she met Ernesto Michelles known as Thayaht (1893-1959), a member of the Italian Futurist movement. Thayaht would join Vionnet's house in the late teens, and share with her a fascination with Greek antiquity. Vionnet wrote: "My inspiration comes from Greek vases, from the beautifully clothed women depicted on them, or even the noble lines of the vase itself.[1]

After returning to Paris, Vionnet became interested in another art movement, Cubism, which viewed objects and the human body as geometrical shapes. Soon, she formulated her own thinking for the cutting of fabric to cover the body, "... the *couturier* should be a geometrician, for the human body makes geometrical figures to which the materials should correspond... where in triangles, squares, and every geometrical figure are considered in the scientific adaptation of the gown to the human form."[2] This view of the human body and how it was to be covered differed drastically from the traditional flat pattern method established centuries earlier. Traditional pattern making achieved various styles by using a flat pattern that was based on a geometrical plan derived from measurements of the body. Halving the body measurements, perpendicular lines were drawn to represent parts of the body with the seams and darts relegated to specific locations on the body. Vionnet refuted the traditional placement of seams by saying: "... but the body does not have seams."[3]

Spiraling Seams

One of Vionnet's most significant innovations was her decision to turn grain cut rectangular-shaped parts fall on the bias of the fabric. She said, "Maybe because everyone else made dresses that flowed in the same direction, I saw that if I turned the fabric on an angle... it gained elasticity. Everything came from my head. Bias came from my head."[4] Many of these warp and weft cut rectangular shapes, when turned to hang on the bias, placed the seams spiraling around the body. How much Thayaht's mindset had to do with that can only be conjectured, but futurist thinking must have been at least in part responsible for extending parts of the garments beyond their seams, allowing the excess fabric to float into space whenever the wearer moved.



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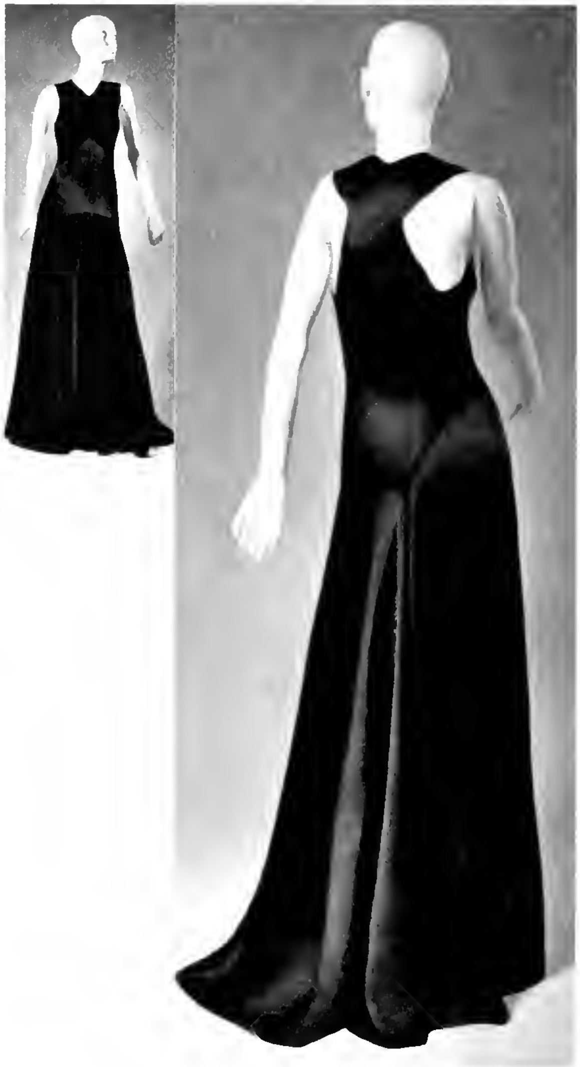

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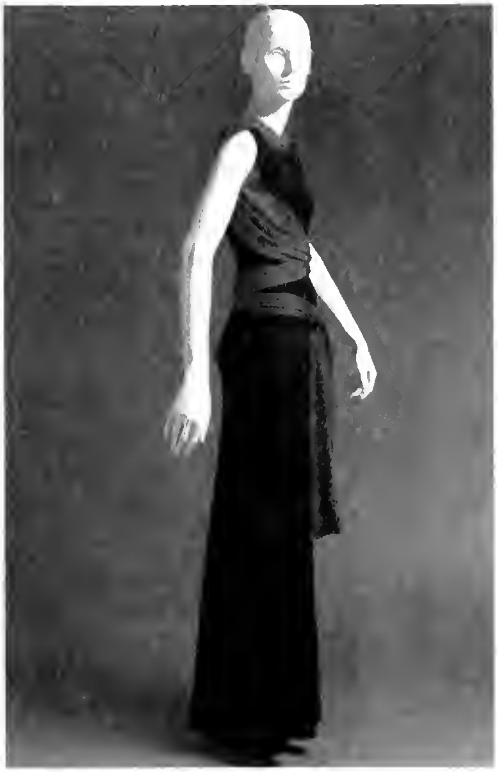
Muslin versus the Sketch

Whereas most designers depend on sketches to work out their new ideas and rely on their pattern-maker to interpret the sketch, Vionnet went directly to the cloth, "I never learned sketching.... We should not dress with a pencil, but start using the fabric."[5] She worked by draping in an inexpensive cloth—muslin—on a nineteenth-century wooden artist's mannequin that was half the scale of the human figure.

Wrapping, Looping, Twisting

Both Thayaht and Vionnet had an interest in the wrapped Japanese kimono and obi. Vionnet used the idea of wrapping for her extremely popular three-armhole garments—blouses, dresses and coats. These have three armholes, and the wearer wraps the garment around her body by successively going through each of the three. Also, many of her designs had long sashes that extended so they could be looped back and stitched, both decorating and weighting the ends. Some designs had a loop combined with two extended parts, such as a skirt part that would be looped at the hemline and extended back to cover another part of the body.

A very successful scarf had loops at both ends. When placed around the neck, each loop was pulled through the other, securing the scarf at the neck with a twisted knot. The twist was used instead of darts and seams. A thirties gown had an extended part containing the bodice and two kimono sleeves. The part was twisted at the center of the neckline with the excess fabric draping around the shoulder, front, and back. This twist was *en lieu* of four darts and two seams.



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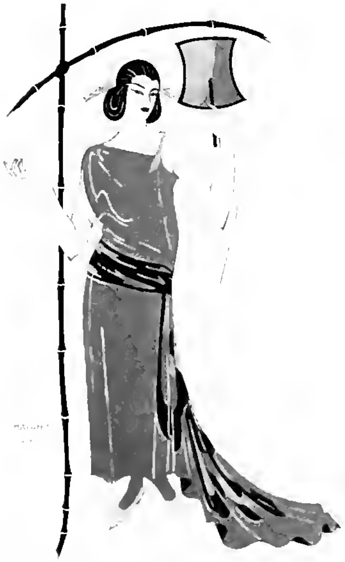

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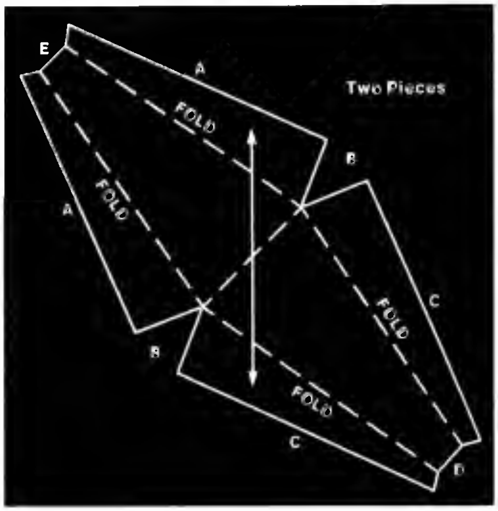

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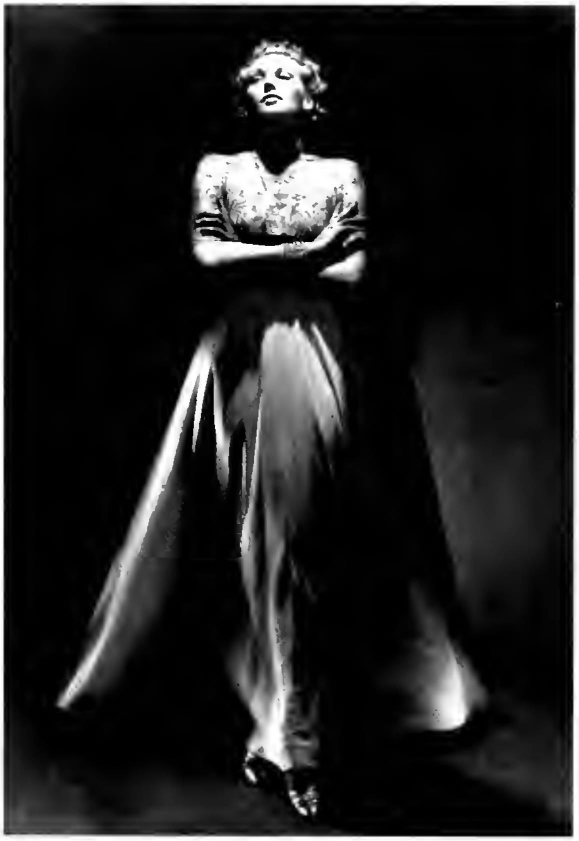
Circular Cuts

Vionnet's circular cuts were especially popular in the 1930s. Because the three directions of the cloth acted differently, uneven hemlines often resulted when hung. Vionnet said: "When one knows one's craft, one takes a piece of fabric not only on the bias, but in every direction (warp, weft, bias). But, of course, you have to know the obedience of the fabric."[6] One method used to alleviate the problem of the uneven hemline was pinning the quadrant, first at its apex, and then the remainder flat to the wall, with dress weights placed along its bottom edge, so it could hang out for a few days. After sufficiently stretching the bias, as Vionnet would say, "le biase a fait son travaille," a pre-draped circular cut pattern was used to cut the parts.



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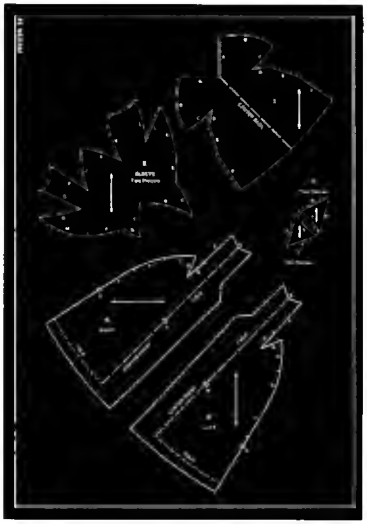
Kirke



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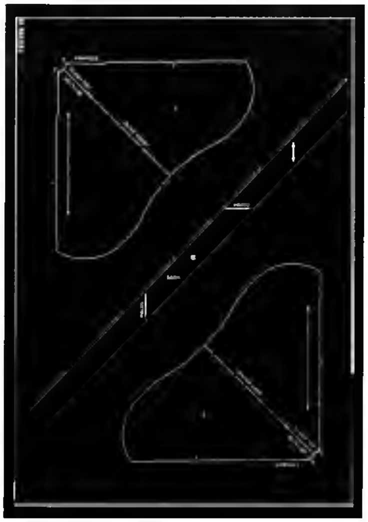
The Slash

The use of two quadrants, one covering the front and the second the back, is a traditional combination of circular cuts. Vionnet's most important innovation here is that she slashed the apexes instead of making a concave cut to remove these points. A twenties dress comprised of two quadrants was slashed and spread at each apex to form the neckline. There were many uses for slashes and even more when combined with insertions.



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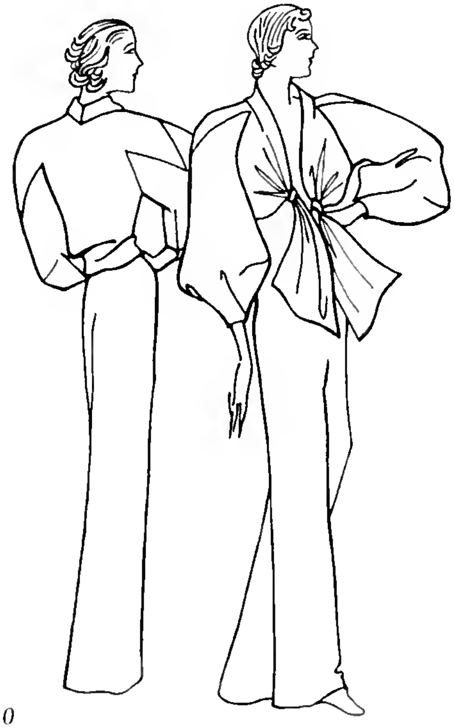
Anatomical cuts

When a part that covers one body plane is extended to cover the next plane, it is an anatomical cut. Slashing and insertions could be combined with other cuts—circular, bias, slashes, and even grain cuts. The insertions need not necessarily be a separate pattern part, but an extension of an adjacent part. The slashes and cutting were on the grain as much as possible. Often that resulted in zigzag seaming that served as decoration.

For Vionnet, there could be no substitute for the natural female body. She created several cuts as well as three necklines—the cowl, halter and Vionnet *decolletage*. All have become generic. There is nothing in their construction that does not have a purpose for fit, movement or decoration: it is always an economy of cut. When one tries to drape any of her designs, one finds that it is necessary to pay attention to each step along the way. Vionnet's are complete compositions from which nothing can be taken away.



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[1] Madeleine Vionnet cited in Jo Ann Ammers Kuller, *Bedeutende Frauen der Gegenwart* (Bremen C Shunemann, 1935), reprinted in Betty Kirke, *Madeleine Vionnet* (San Francisco. Chronicle, 1998) 41

[2] Vionnet cited in Bettina Bedwell, *How to Enjoy Paris* (Paris Vernier, 1921); reprinted in Kirke 39

[3] Kirke, 233.

[4] Vionnet cited in *Washington Post* 22 Sep 1974, reprinted in Kirke 36.

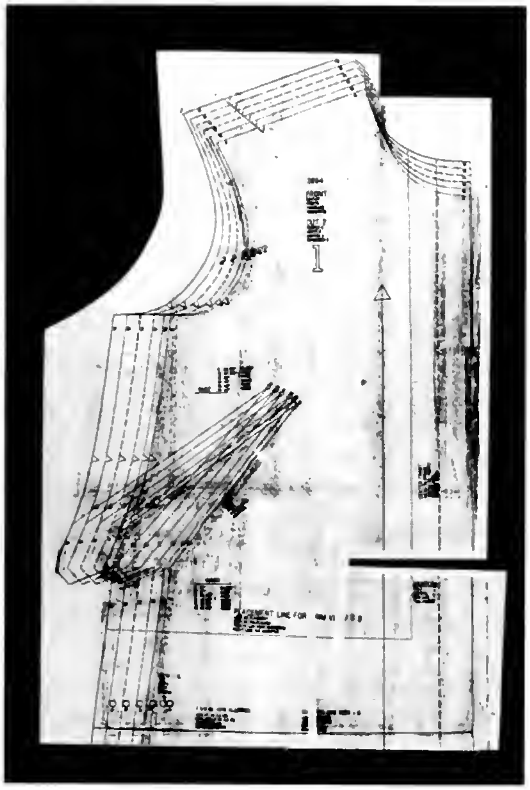
[5] Vionnet cited in *International Herald Tribune* 2 Feb 1973; reprinted in Kirke 28.

[6] Ibid., reprinted in Kirke 87

Illustration Credits

all patterns researched and drawn by Betty Kirke
Frontispiece: Advertisement published in *Harper's Bazaar*, 1926.
Figure 2, 3: Anatomically-cut dress with unusual joining of bias seam to grain, 1932.
Figure 4: *Japonika* by Thayaht published in *Gazette du Bon Ton*, 1924.
Figure 5: Dress with long sash, mid-1930s.
Figure 6: Looped scarf pattern.
Figure 7,8: Dancing dress structured in quadrants with vertical slashes, 1922.
Figure 9,10: Jacket with anatomical-cut bodice, c. 1930.
Figure 11: Rhinestone embroidered lace dress, 1938.

Corners and Darts



2

Scenario

> The occupant sits on a chair in a room. The clothes on the occupant have been tailored to fit the surface of the body along with pockets to carry objects. The chair is placed on a carpet that runs along the floor until it reaches the surface of a wall. Upon that wall is a layer of wallpaper, tailored to fit the openings of doorways, windows, and terminating at closets.

Clothes, objects in a room, and the surfaces that line an interior are all made using drawings at a 1:1 scale. This paper focuses on the drawing conventions used in clothing patterns, furniture, and architecture, and the possibility of sharing notations, which could result in new constructions. A drawing previously analyzed by Robin Evans becomes the instigator to test the exchangeability of these drawing conventions. The result relies on the borrowing of clothing pattern construction techniques to inform the production of architecture in a project for a chair.

Both architectural and clothing production have formalized the process of representation. This has resulted in a standardized language specific to each discipline. Inherent are certain rules, notations, and symbols that have the potential to extend from one discipline to another. The orthographic drawing is the convention used in the practice of architecture. It allows for the accurate measurement and representation of individual surfaces such as plan, elevation, section, and detail views, which then get keyed together through a system of references. These flattened views are chosen to rep-

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resent the most important information, usually with a wall or floor serving as a base to the drawing. A scale is applied to the architectural drawings at a certain proportion. In contrast, the scale of the clothing pattern is established at 1:1. Notations on the pattern instruct the tailor about the size, centerline, notches, grain-line direction, folding, pinning, darts, and the location of additional assembly as well as connection details.[1]

The clothing pattern becomes a documentation of the body. It mimics the surface of the skin, allowing the pattern to unfold and take precedence over a dominant organizing system, such as the grid commonly referred to in orthographic drawing systems. In contrast, clothing patterns locate darts by lining the irregular surface of the body and by unfolding that surface onto a plane. The dart notation of a pattern for a coat, for example, tells the tailor how to develop a flat surface or create a volume through the darts located around the waist (Fig. 2). The clothing pattern confronts the problem of wrapping a form that cannot fold or unfold with the same precision as an orthogonal form.

The question can be asked: how can the conventions of the clothing pattern enter into a dialogue with the orthographic system? One of the consequences of the orthographic system is that people and objects that inhabit the interior are largely absent from the drawing, although they are what we perceive in an occupied space. It is this situation that allows me to form a dialogue between architecture and clothing. An object one might find in a room, such as a chair that references the occupant, becomes the focus of this investigation. The chair mediates between the body and the architecture and is given precedence in the orthographic drawing as a base. This investigation explores the possibility of making the dart used in clothing construction become structural in architecture.

Referring back to the opening scenario of the occupant sitting on a chair in a room, we can rethink the types of drawing used to represent the elements within that space. The surfaces lining the room, such as wallpaper and rugs, are made at a 1:1 scale and share similar characteristics with a clothing pattern. The pliable materials of interior surface linings are shaped in a non-orthogonal manner, as if they take into consideration the notation of darts. For instance, if a layer of wallpaper is peeled away, it becomes a pattern lifted off the wall. Therefore, a connection can be made between the wallpaper as a full-scale drawing and an unfolded drawing as the pattern of a volume. Interiors have conditions that require darts, such as the point where the door molding projects into space creating a volume. Just like darts in clothing, the pattern allows one to manipulate surfaces to form a volume.

A room in a house is chosen to test the relationship of interior surfaces to the notation of darts in clothing patterns. Muslin, the material typically used for mocking up clothing patterns, acts both as wallpaper and as a full-scale drawing. Surfaces are lined with muslin to find

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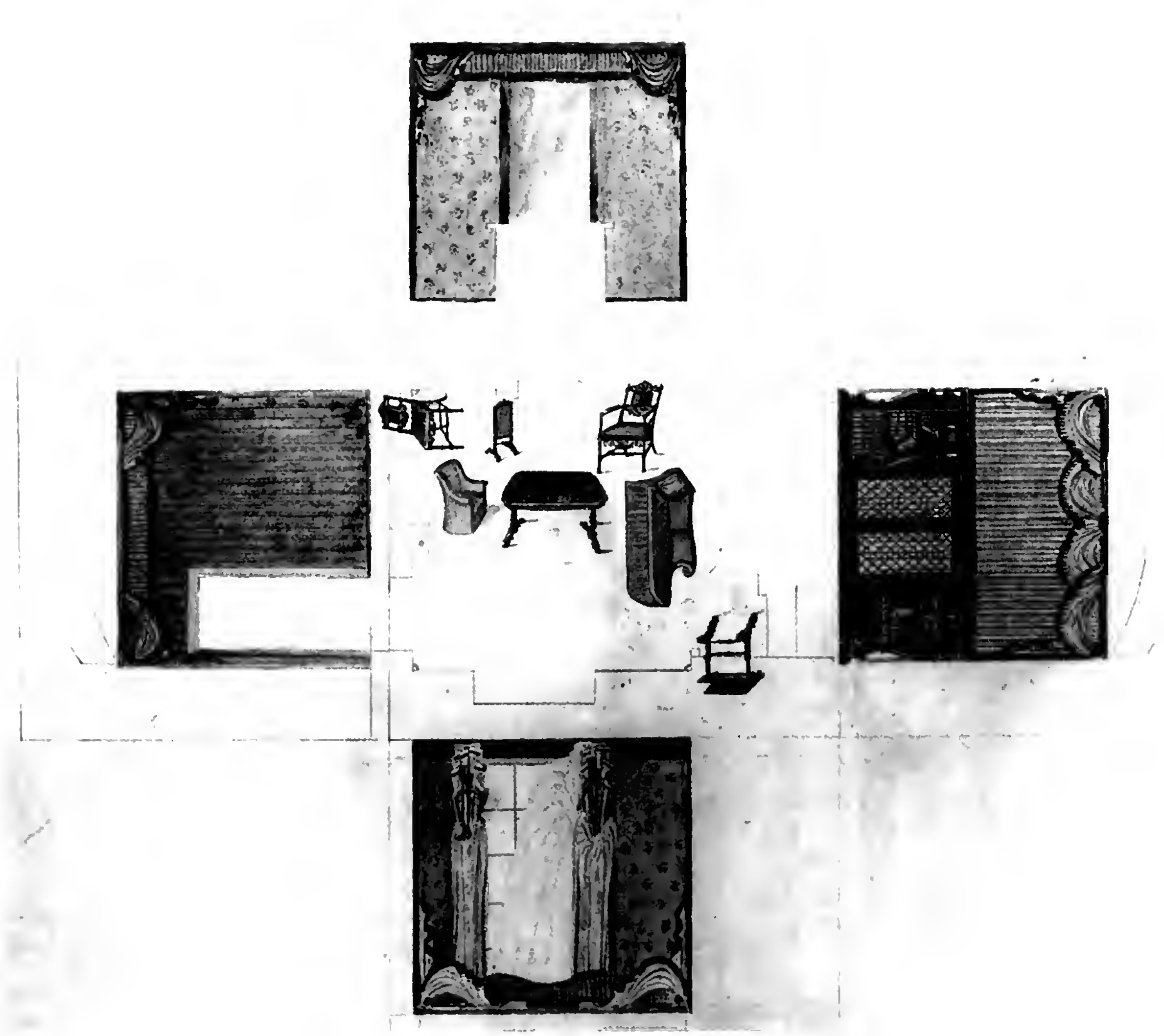
[1] Reader's Digest, *Complete Guide to Sewing* (New York. Reader's Digest Association, 1989) 54-57



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where the interior might require darts. As the wallpaper meets the door molding, it becomes tailored to this element projecting from the surface (Fig. 3). As a result, the wallpaper becomes the material for drafting upon, enabling us to locate darts in architecture. The question can be asked: can the wallpaper take on the characteristics of drawings and present notations as tangible elements in the interior space? Or vice versa, what would that mean for the clothing pattern? It is this relationship that will guide the chair project allowing the drawing system used for clothing patterns to participate in the orthographic architectural drawing.

The Developed Surface Interior

In "The Developed Surface," Robin Evans discusses a drawing by Gillows and Company, nineteenth-century furniture makers.[2] Evans calls this drawing type the "developed surface interior," in which walls unfold at their corners to be read in relation to the plan (Fig. 4).[3] As the elevations separate from one another, a wedge shape is formed between them. This shape is similar to the scribed space in *White Body Fan* by the artist

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[2] Robin Evans, "The Developed Surface," *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997): 219-23

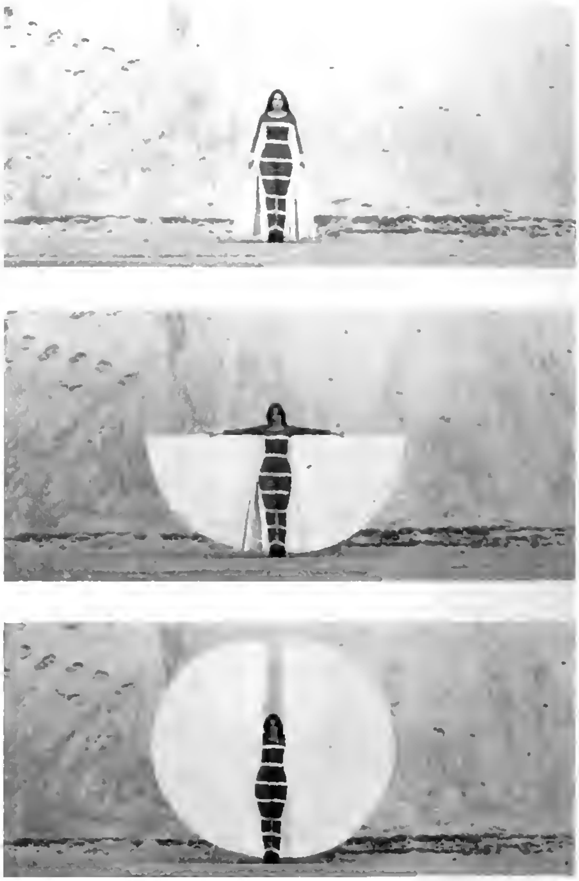
[3] Evans, 202

Rebecca Horn (Fig. 5). The image offers an example of a body scribing a line in space and making that line tangible. Darts used in clothing patterns employ the same line and wedge shape and are similarly made tangible as they give structure to the clothing. I want to test the potential of this dart, the space spanning between surfaces, which I will call "wing space." The notation in the "developed surface interior" drawing has the potential to become the structure that pulls these walls together to form a volume. This is the point at which a relationship can be established at full scale between the corner in architecture and the dart in clothing patterns.

On the surfaces of these elevations, the furniture makers attempted to show how the furnishings would fit in the interior space. The furnishings are applied as if they belong to that surface without regard to the whole. If a chair is to be placed next to a wall, the chair gravitates towards that surface. Placing objects towards the center of the floor plan becomes more difficult as the draftsman tries to show the furniture in a view that would be the clearest. The drawing simultaneously consists of two different drawing types: plan and perspective. The furniture drawn in perspective appears to be suspended within the space of the plan, leaving it up to our imagination to connect the walls at their edges and fold the room back up so that it reads as a whole. This architectural drawing represents the interior surfaces of elevation and floor plan as the primary surfaces that act as a base for personal objects to be placed upon. The personal objects are thus assigned a secondary role. Why can't the personal objects that one places in the interior be the base upon which the interior architectural surfaces unfold? How would that change the structure of a space?

The Chair Plan

A chair is chosen as a vehicle to answer these questions. The construction of the chair begins by using the hybridized rules of the two drawing conventions: the 1:1 scale borrowed from clothing patterns and the unfolded base view of the orthographic system. By its nature, the drawing allows singular elevations, which act as a pattern for the chair to be made. The edges of the chair are where it is to be unfolded, where one finds those spaces that offer darts or wing spaces. This act begins to address the possibility of finding those latent notations that we see in clothing patterns and making them tangible (Fig. 7).



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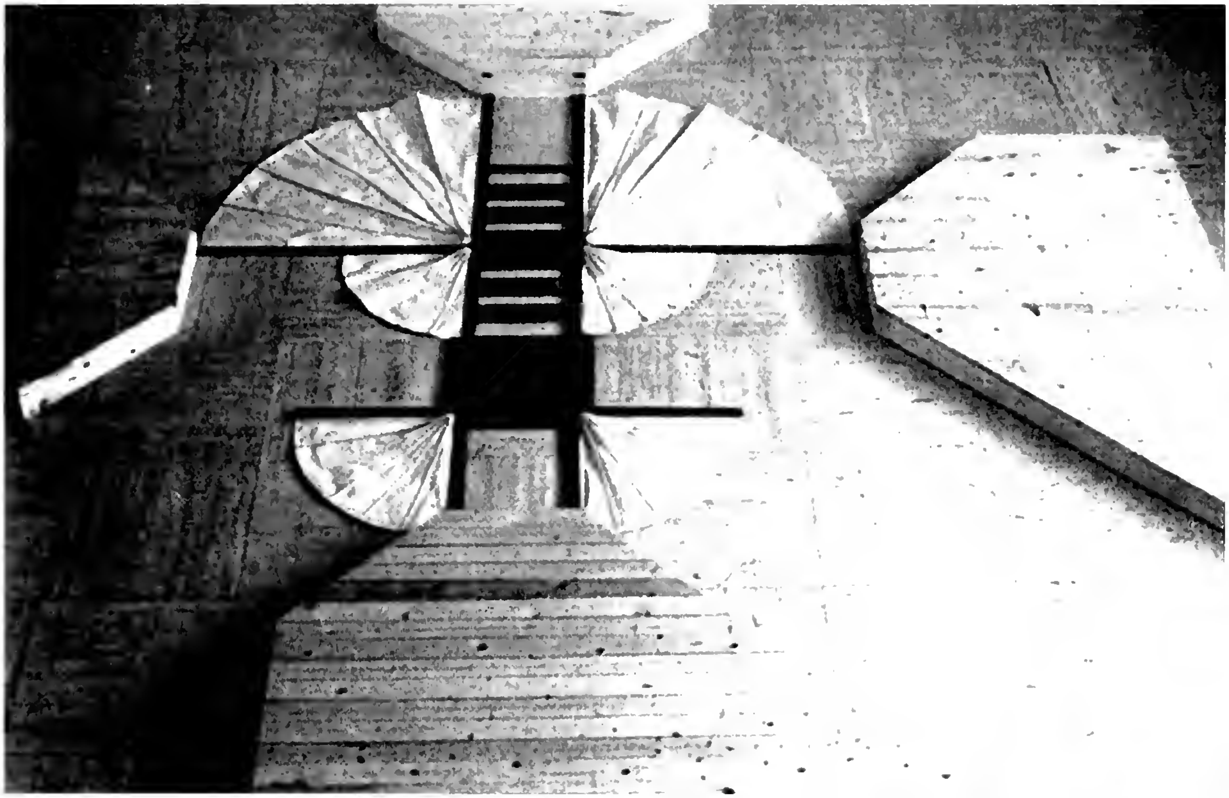
The relationship of the floor to the objects that are placed on it refers us back to my earlier question: how can objects be given priority by being the base upon which architectural surfaces unfold? The chair assumes priority on the plan, and when unfolded, it unfolds the floor. New edges are created in response to the floor, as it breaks from itself to connect to the unfolded chair. Is there room in the drawing system for latent notations to become tangible? Can two drawing systems, one used for architecture, the other for clothing patterns, provide information to further one another? These questions are addressed through the relationship of parts in *The Chair Plan* (Frontispiece, Fig. 6).



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Conclusion

The dart is a notation that tells the tailor how to make a flat surface follow the contour of the body. Is it possible for architecture to reconsider the corner by taking a cue from the dart in clothing patterns? The conventional architectural drawing is represented on a standard sheet with no alteration to the physical character of the paper. The drawing, a two-dimensional representation, is expected to supply all the information about how a building comes together. In contrast, clothing construction allows notations to be visible at full scale; here representation is simultaneously part of the construction and of the finished product. Can we consider the possibility of the standard architectural drawing sheet being changed? If we take cues from related disciplines such as clothing patterns and see them in the light of architecture, would we discover new pockets of space that offer something new to architecture? I think so.

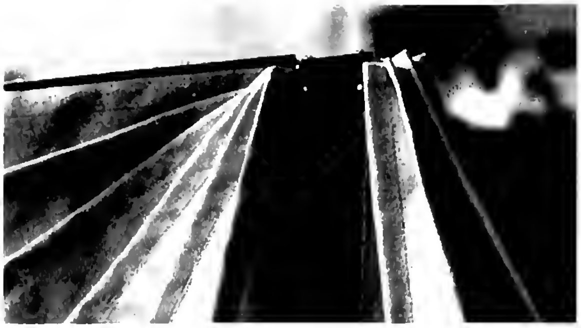

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Illustration Credits

Frontispiece: *The Chair Plan*, work of the author

Figure 2: Pattern for a coat with dart notation

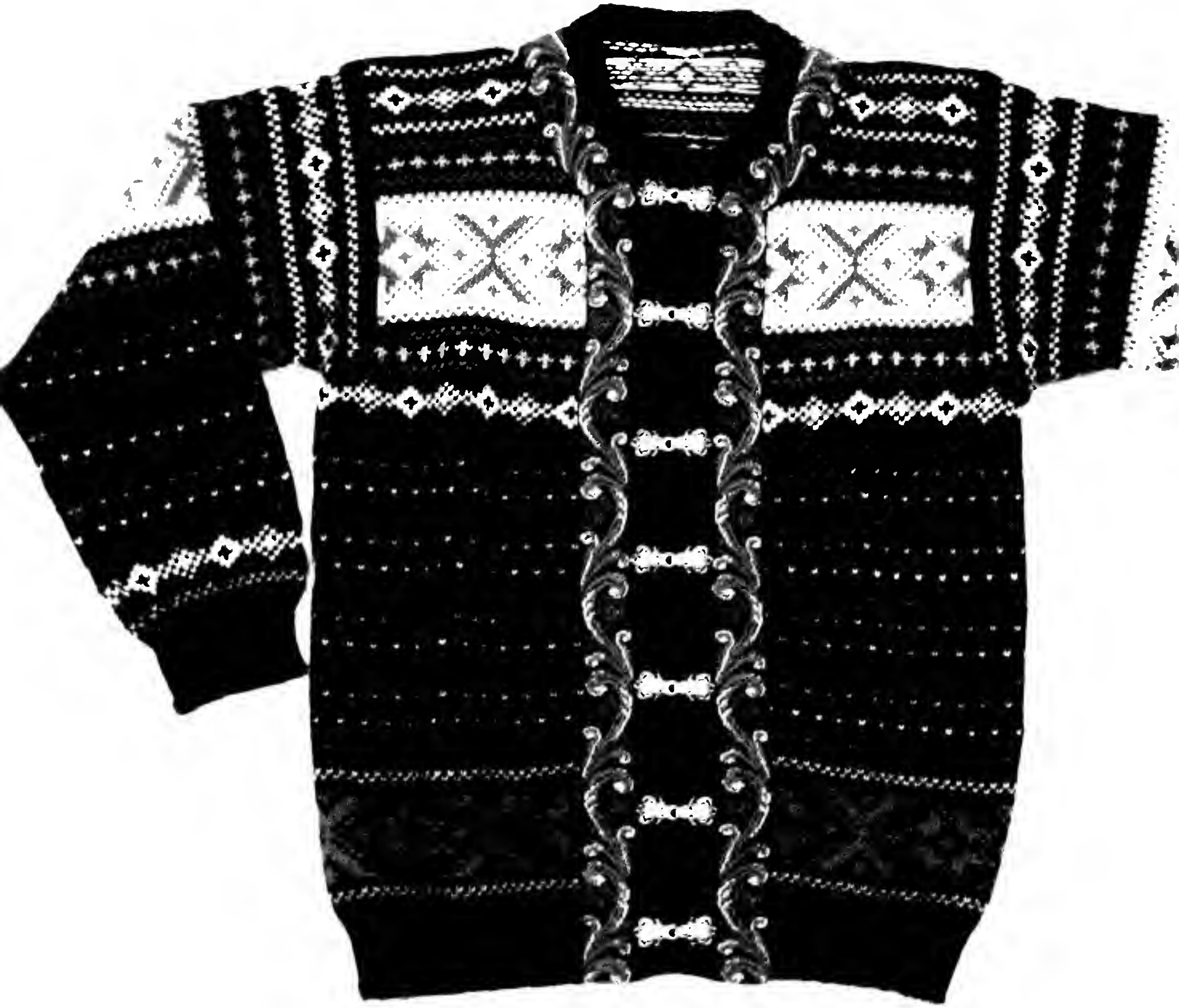
Figure 3: *Muslin Wallpaper*, work of the author

Figure 4: Plan by Gillows and Company drawn in 1822 from Robin Evans, "The Developed Surface," *Translations from Drawing to Building and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997): 202

Figure 5: *White Body Fan* by Rebecca Horn, 1972 from *Rebecca Horn* (New York: Rizzoli International, 1993): 120

Figure 6: *The Chair Plan* unfolded, work of the author

Figure 7: Detail of *Chair Plan*, work of the author



The Cardigan

Cardigan, ca. 1980. Made in Norway. Wool with pewter buttons. Length at center back: 25 in.

Provenance
This traditional Norwegian cardigan was the property of Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000), who is often credited with having introduced phenomenology into architectural discourse. His exceptionally popular books, some of which have been translated into seven languages, include *Intentions in Architecture* (1965), *Meaning in Western Architecture* (1975), and *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture* (1980). Influenced by the life and work of German philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976), Norberg-Schulz professed a deep affinity for Norwegian rural folk life, which he considered to be the home of his people's Spirit. Between 1988 and 1993, Norberg-Schulz rented a traditional Norwegian Farm, or "Stabbur," at Minnesjord where he spent the summers with his family. He wore this folkloric cardigan to receive guests and engage in minor peasant work, such as scything the grass. It is very possible that Norberg-Schulz's decision to live in the country was in part driven by the desire to live or be like Heidegger, who spent his free time in his Todtnauberg hut, in Germany's Black Forest, from the mid 1930s onward. In October 2000, Anna Maria de Domenicis, Norberg-Schulz's widow and translator, gave the cardigan to Jorge Otero-Pailos who was then conducting research in Oslo for his forthcoming dissertation entitled *Theorizing the Anti-Avant-Garde: Invocations of Phenomenology in Architectural Discourse, 1945-1989.*

Contributors

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has worked as an architect throughout Eastern Europe. He is currently completing a Ph.D in architectural history and theory at Harvard University.

is a designer based in New York who has worked on projects for the theater, film, television, opera, books, records, and museum installations. Her designs have been exhibited around the world and are included in the permanent collection of the Museum of Modern Art in New York.

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is an architect, historian and critic who teaches at the University of Toronto.

worked as a designer in California and New York and as a costume restorer at the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. She later became a senior conservator of the costume and textile collection at the Museum of Fashion Institute of Technology where she also teaches.

is the director of Miyake Design Studio (MDS) which is based in Tokyo and also has offices in Paris and London. His work has been exhibited internationally. A current exhibition is travelling between the Cartier Foundation in Paris, the ACE Galley in New York, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Tokyo.

is a Ph.D. candidate in the History, Theory, and Criticism Section at the Department of Architecture at MIT. The title of his dissertation is *Seeing the Future: An Aesthetic of Ascension in Norman Bel Geddes's Futurama*.

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is currently enrolled in the M.Arch. program at MIT where he is also pursuing the Urban Design Certificate. He lives in an apartment with a green shag rug and is waiting for it to come back in style.

is an Assistant Professor at the Taubman College of Architecture and Urban Planning, University of Michigan. Her book, *Wren's "Tracts" on Architecture and Other Writings*, was published by Cambridge University Press in 1998.

teaches in and is coordinator of the Faculty of History and Theory of Architecture and Cities at the Southern California Institute of Architecture. He is a also a principal in AUDC, Architecture Urbanism Design Collaborative.

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call for submissions

> I wish I'd known there was a standardized set... I was trying to do these [Rorschach paintings] to actually read into them and write about them, but I never really had the time to do that. So I was going to hire somebody to read into them, to pretend that it was me, so that they'd be a little more... interesting. Because all I would see would be a dog's face or something like a tree or a bird or a flower. Somebody else could see a lot more.
>
> *Andy Warhol on his Rorschach painting series, 1986*

IANT
anomalous
dissent

If modernity is indeed marked by the domination of the universal over the particular, it should not be surprising that since its inception modernism has been so concerned with identifying, analyzing, and understanding instances of deviance. Our contemporary critique of modernism, on the other hand, attempts to remedy the injustice done to the particularity of the deviant. In the field of architecture, for example, critics, theoreticians, and historians alike seem to be fascinated by the specific instance that does not fit in. The deviant, of course, inevitably implies the norm, the standard or the canon from which it is imagined to have escaped. As such, the examination of the deviant is an invaluable opportunity to rethink these general forms. Once such rethinking is triggered, however, the deviant may assume an entirely different kind of significance.

In this issue of *Thresholds*, we would like to explore the interplay between norms and their transgressors with a critical eye on both. We are also interested in investigating particular strategies that may be described as deviant, such as irony, evasion, humor, shock, etc. What is the significance of thinking about the deviant? What are some of the specific mechanisms of translation in theory and practice from the normal to the deviant ? When is the deviant the most normal, and when is the normal the most deviant? What other models are possible to envision the relationship between the two?

We invite critical perspectives that explore these issues in a variety of media, including essays, projects, historical analyses, theses, or other deviancies. Submissions from fields other than architecture are welcome. Essays are limited to 2500 words. A digital copy of the text is required as well as high quality reproductions or digital files of all images. Please also include a two-sentence biography of the author(s) for publication. *Thresholds* aims to print material not previously published.

Submissions are due October 12, 2001

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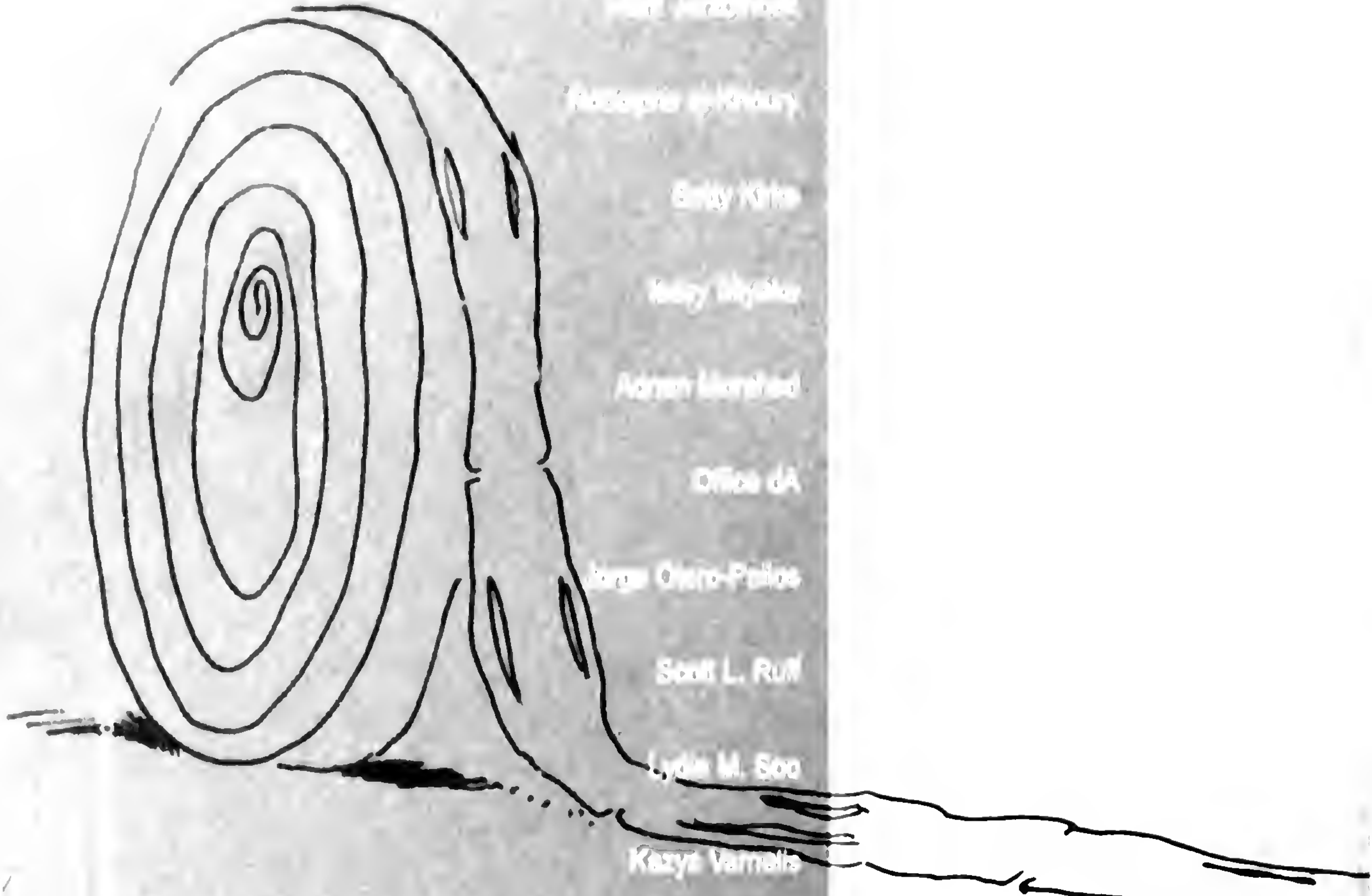

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